

Minutes of the 11th Meeting of
the Social Services Committee (2016-2017) of
the Tuen Mun District Council

Date: 12 September 2017 (Tuesday)

Time: 9:30 a.m.

Venue: Tuen Mun District Council (TMDC) Conference Room

<u>Present:</u>		<u>Time of Arrival</u>	<u>Time of Departure</u>
Ms SO Ka-man (Chairman)	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr TSANG Hin-hong (Vice Chairman)	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr LEUNG Kin-man, BBS, MH, JP	TMDC Chairman	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr SO Shiu-shing	TMDC Member	9:50 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr TO Shek-yuen, MH	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms KONG Fung-yi	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr CHAN Yau-hoi, BBS, MH, JP	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms WONG Lai-sheung, Catherine	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms HO Hang-mui	TMDC Member	9:32 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr TSUI Fan, MH	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms CHING Chi-hung	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms LUNG Shui-hing, MH	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr CHAN Man-wah, MH	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr CHEUNG Hang-fai	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms CHU Shun-nga, Beatrice	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr MO Shing-fung	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr YEUNG Chi-hang	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr YAN Siu-nam	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr TAM Chun-yin	TMDC Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms NG Dip-pui	Co-opted Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr YU Tai-wai	Co-opted Member	9:38 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr CHU Wai-ming	Co-opted Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms TSANG Ka-lai	Co-opted Member	9:35 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr TSANG Hing-chung	Co-opted Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms LAI Ka-man	Co-opted Member	9:30 a.m.	End of meeting
Mr SO Wai-luen	Co-opted Member	9:32 a.m.	End of meeting
Ms HO Chui-wan, Ida (Secretary)	Executive Officer (District Council)1, Tuen Mun District Office, Home Affairs Department		

Absent with Apologies:

Mr KAM Man-fung	TMDC Member
Mr YIP Man-pan	TMDC Member
Mr CHAN Ho-ting	Co-opted Member

In Invitation:

Dr Steve CHAN	Cluster General Manager (Administrative Services), New Territories West Cluster, Hospital Authority
Mr K M YIU	Cluster Manager (Public Affairs & Donation Management), New Territories West Cluster, Hospital Authority
Ms Agnes WONG	Hospital Manager (Facilities Management), Tuen Mun Hospital, Hospital Authority
Dr LOH Lai-ting, Taron	Senior Medical & Health Officer (Community Liaison)1, Department of Health

In Attendance:

Mr CHAU Ka-nin, Eric	Senior Liaison Officer (2), Tuen Mun District Office, Home Affairs Department
Mr LAM Man-kwong	Senior School Development Officer (Tuen Mun)3, Education Bureau
Mrs NG NG Lai-chun	Assistant District Social Welfare Officer (Tuen Mun)2, Social Welfare Department
Mr LEE Wai-ming	Police Community Relations Officer (Tuen Mun District), Hong Kong Police Force

I. Opening Remarks

The Chairlady welcomed all to the 11th meeting of the Social Services Committee (“SSC”). On behalf of the SSC, she expressed thanks to Mr LEUNG Cheuk-fai, the former Senior School Development Officer of Education Bureau, for his past contributions to the SSC, and welcomed Mr LAM Man-kwong, the new Senior School Development Officer of Education Bureau.

2. The Chairlady reminded Members that any Member who was aware of a personal interest in a discussion item should declare the interest before the discussion. She would, in accordance with Order 39(12) of the Tuen Mun District Council (“TMDC”) Standing Orders, decide whether the Member who had declared an interest might speak or vote on the matter, might remain in the meeting as an observer, or should withdraw from the meeting. All cases of declaration of interests would be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

II. Absence from Meeting

3. The Secretariat had not received any application for leave of absence from Members.

III. Confirmation of Minutes of The Last Meeting

4. As Members proposed no amendments to the minutes of the 10th meeting of the SSC (2016-2017), the Chairlady announced that the minutes were confirmed.

IV. Discussion Items

(A) Request for Lowering the Eligibility Age for Medical Fee Waiver to 65 (SSC Paper No. 44/2017) (Reply from Food and Health Bureau and Hospital Authority)

5. The first proposer of the paper was disappointed that the Food and Health Bureau (“FHB”) had not sent any representative to the meeting. He said beginning from June this year, the Hospital Authority (“HA”) rolled out a series of new measures including the increase in the amount of subsidy for medical expenses and the lowering of the eligibility age for medical waiver. If the HA could take care of the medical needs of the citizens earlier, the medical expenses in later days could be much reduced, so he suggested the HA to consider lowering the eligibility age for medical fee waiver to 65. He further expressed that at present, many citizens did not know the requirements and procedures for applying for medical fee waivers and so, the department should enhance the publicity of all the arrangements.

6. Members' comments and enquiries are summarised as follows:
- (i) A Member said it was a pity not having a representative from the relevant government department present at the meeting and that the SSC should carry on discussion of this issue until the relevant departmental representative attended a SSC meeting and listened to the opinions of the District Council ("DC");
 - (ii) A Member pointed out that at present, only elderly persons aged 75 or above and receiving Older Age Living Allowance were eligible for medical fee waiver; therefore, many elderly persons in need were excluded. So, he/she requested the Government to lower the eligibility age for medical fee waiver to 65;
 - (iii) A Member considered the present medical measures too harsh and did not take care of the needs of most of the elderly. Taking care of the health of the elderly at the early stage could reduce medical expenses in the long term; hence, he/she viewed that the Government should put more resources into the HA;
 - (iv) A Member asked if the Social Welfare Department had any figure showing that the elderly aged between 65 and 75 had reflected the insufficiency of medical assistance; and
 - (v) A Member pointed out that at present, numerous social welfare benefits required an asset test, and it was unfair to some elderly persons who were denied of the benefit due to a slightly excess of the asset limit. She suggested that the Government implement the universal retirement protection scheme as soon as possible to protect the livelihoods of the elderly.
7. The Chairlady said that from past experience, departmental representatives in general were reluctant to attend committee meetings, so she asked Members to decide whether to raise the discussion to the DC level or to carry on in the next SSC meeting.
8. Several Members responded to the Chairlady's question as follows:
- (i) A Member reckoned that the government departments did not respect the committees of the DC and it was not good practice for them to respond to Members' enquiries merely in writing. The present Chief Executive advocated to boost ties with the people whereas the government departments did not respect the DCs, so it was suggested that the SSC write to the Chief Executive to reflect their disrespect to the DCs;

- (ii) During the previous visit of the Chief Secretary for Administration to the TMDC, several Members had already reflected to him that the government departments did not send any representative to the meetings, so it was also suggested writing to the Chief Secretary for Administration. There were Members who considered it more appropriate to write to the Chief Executive; and
- (iii) A Member considered that the DC already had many items that called for its attention; to avoid extending its meeting, this item should continue to be discussed in the SSC meetings.

9. The Chairlady concluded that the SSC would carry on the discussion of this item and the SSC would write to the Chief Executive and the FHB to reflect the lack of departmental representatives attending committee meetings. Secretariat

(Post-meeting note: The above two letters had been sent on 20 October 2017.)

(B) Request the Government to Provide Free Vaccination of 13-Valent Pneumococcal Conjugate Vaccine Comprehensively to Elderly Persons Aged 65 or Above (SSC Paper No. 45/2017) (Reply from Department of Health)

10. The Chairlady welcomed Dr. LOH Lai-ting, Taron, Senior Medical & Health Officer (Community Liaison) 1 of the Department of Health (“DH”) to the meeting.

11. The first proposer of the paper reported that beginning from next year, under the vaccination schemes, free or subsidized 13-valent pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (PCV13) would be provided for the high-risk elderly persons who were eligible for the schemes. She opined that the said schemes should not just cover high-risk elderly persons, instead, all the elderly aged 65 or above should be administered with PCV13 and for free.

12. Dr LOH of the DH responded that invasive pneumococcal disease usually posed a higher risk to young children and the elderly. At present, through the Government Vaccination Programme and the Vaccination Subsidy Scheme, the Government provided free or subsidized vaccination for eligible elderly persons of age 65 or above and who had never before received the pneumococcal vaccine. Taking both the seasonal flu vaccine and the pneumococcal vaccine at the same time could reduce the risk of hospitalisation and even death of the elderly. In the pneumococcal vaccination schemes of year 2017-2018, the Government would provide a free dose of PCV13 to elderly persons with high-risk conditions to boost their immunity system

against infection by pneumococcus; the Government would continue to provide free or subsidized 23-valent pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (23vPPV) to eligible elderly persons of age 65 or above who had never received pneumococcal vaccination before. Both 23vPPV and PCV13 were safe and able to prevent invasive pneumococcal diseases and 23vPPV included a larger number of serotypes than PCV13. After reviewing and consolidating the relevant information, the Scientific Committee on Vaccine Preventable Diseases (“SCVPD”) of the Centre for Health Protection proposed in July 2016 that if elderly persons of age 65 or above had high-risk conditions, they should first be given one dose of PCV13 and one year afterwards, a dose of 23vPPV, in order to have all-round protection; but if an elderly person with high-risk conditions had already received the 23vPPV, then he should receive a dose of PCV13 one year later. As for the elderly without high-risk conditions, they could take one dose of PCV13 or one dose of 23vPPV.

13. Dr LOH of the DH said that after considering the SCVPD’s suggestions, the department issued a press release on 31 July 2017 on the New Vaccination Arrangement in 2017/18. High-risk elderly persons aged 65 or above who had never received pneumococcal vaccination before were eligible for a free or subsidized dose of PCV13, and a dose of 23vPPV after 1 year; for high-risk elderly persons aged 65 or above who had already received 23vPPV, the Government would provide a free or subsidized dose of PCV13 by phases; elderly persons aged 65 or above without high-risk conditions who had never received pneumococcal vaccination before could receive a subsidy for a dose of 23vPPV.

14. A Member considered the contents of the vaccination scheme complicated, a citizen might not know whether he belonged to the high-risk category or not and might not be able to select the right vaccine. He/she also enquired about the risk involved in the situation that a high-risk person had received the 23vPPV but not the PCV13 one year thereafter. Another Member reiterated the request for the Government to provide free PCV13 for all elderly persons of age 65 or above to prevent cross-infections in the community.

15. Dr LOH of the DH responded that the department would release information about the vaccination schemes through various channels to explain the arrangements to the public. If an elderly person wished to know whether or not he belonged to the high-risk group and whether or not a booster vaccine was required, he could bring along his past vaccination record/card for examination by a doctor or contact the clinic or family doctor who had given him the vaccine before. The Government would keep close communication with the vaccine industry to ensure that the elderly could receive the right pneumococcal vaccine. Apart from issuing the above press release on 31 July 2017, the department had also held a briefing session in August of the same year for the relevant stakeholders. For elders 65 years of age and older without high-risk

conditions, SCVPD recommended either a single dose of PCV13 or a single dose of 23vPPV, and the department's Vaccination Subsidy Scheme would continue to provide them with one subsidised dose of 23vPPV. In addition, the Government Vaccination Programme recommended that all the elderly living in residential homes for the elderly should receive pneumococcal vaccines to reduce the risk of infection inside the residential homes. She thanked Members for their attention in the issue of vaccination and would reflect their opinions to the relevant medical units.

16. A Member enquired about the timetable of the briefing session on vaccination and indicated that if needed, District Councillors could assist in the promotion of the briefing session. He also enquired whether the DH had any guidelines to help the elderly without high-risk conditions choose between PCV13 and 23vPPV.

17. Dr LOH of the DH responded that in August this year, the department invited all doctors and fellow workers participating in the vaccination schemes to a briefing session, in which they would explain the arrangements of the vaccination schemes to the stakeholders concerned. She suggested that if necessary, an elderly person might enquire his family doctor or a clinic that provided vaccination as to whether he should receive a pneumococcal vaccine or a pneumococcal booster vaccine, as well as the type of vaccine. Under the current Vaccination Subsidy Scheme, the subsidy level of one dose of 23vPPV was HK\$190 and that for PCV13 was HK\$730. The elderly could choose the right vaccines for themselves.

18. A Member said that to build a healthy Hong Kong, the DH should provide free pneumococcal vaccination for all elderly persons of age 65 or above. She suggested the SSC to write to the DH to reflect Members' opinion.

19. The Chairlady summarised that the SSC would write to the DH to reflect Members' Secretariat opinion, she also requested Dr LOH of the DH to reflect to the department the concerns of Members.

(Post-meeting note: The above letter was sent on 20 October 2017. The DH replied on 26 October 2017, see annex 2 for details.)

V. Reporting Items

(A) Progress Report on Tuen Mun Hospital Operating Theatre Extension Project (SSC Paper No. 46/2017)

20. The Chairlady welcomed Dr CHAN Chee-keung, Cluster Chief Executive, New

Territories West Cluster; Mr K M YIU, Cluster Manager (Public Affairs & Donation Management), New Territories West Cluster, and Ms WONG Hor-ying, Tuen Mun Hospital Manager (Facilities Manager) of the Hospital Authority (“HA”), to the meeting.

21. Dr CHAN of the HA introduced the progress of the captioned project by powerpoint (Annex 1).

22. A Member expressed support for the captioned extension project and hoped to see its early completion, since it would provide a better environment for the patients. He said that the Working Group on Traffic Problems within Tuen Mun District under the Traffic and Transport Committee had discussed on the widening of the ramp at the Tuen Mun Hospital Stop of the Light Rail because that area was extremely crowded during peak hours; therefore, he suggested the HA to consider carrying out the extension works there too, besides those of the operating theatre.

23. Dr CHAN of the HA responded that the HA had invited the MTR Corporation Limited (“MTRCL”) to pay a site visit, and would strive to cooperate in the relevant works.

24. The Chairlady said that the HA had invited Members of the SSC and other TMDC Members to visit the Tuen Mun Hospital on 18 September of this year. She suggested that besides viewing the extension works of the operating theatre, Members could also take a site inspection of the ramp at the Tuen Mun Hospital Stop of the Light Rail.

(B) Work Reports by the Working Groups under the Social Services Committee
(SSC Paper No. 47/2017)

(i) Working Group on Medical and Rehabilitation Services

25. Members noted the report of the above working group.

(ii) Working Group on Community Care

26. Members noted the report of the above working group.

(iii) Working Group on Education and Youth Services

27. Members noted the report of the above working group.

(iv) Working Group on the Promotion of Healthy Diet

28. Members noted the report of the above working group.

29. The convener of the working group said they had agreed to co-organise activities with the Free Methodist Church Tuen Mun Children & Youth Integrated Services Centre and would report to the SSC on the details of the activities once they received them.

30. The Chairlady announced that the four reports were endorsed.

(C) **Report by the Tuen Mun District School Development Section of the Education Bureau**
(SSC Paper No. 48/2017)

31. Members noted the contents of the report of the Education Bureau (“EDB”).

32. Mr TO Sheck-yuen declared that he was the director of Hing Tak School. After the Chairlady had consulted with Members, it was decided that Mr TO could continue to participate in the discussion.

33. Members’ comments and enquiries are summarised as follows:

- (i) A Member enquired on the current number of cross-boundary students in the primary and secondary schools of Tuen Mun District. As there were news reports on schools with "shadow students" and their suspected fraudulent claims for school allowances, he requested the EDB to provide more information about it;
- (ii) Some news reports mentioned that beginning from the school term of this year, schools in the mainland accepted enrollment from the singly and doubly non-permanent resident children who were also cross-boundary students enrolled in the schools of Hong Kong at the same time. He requested the EDB to provide the relevant statistics;
- (iii) Primary and secondary school students crossing the boundary from the Mainland to Hong Kong to attend school each day had impact on the Hong Kong education system; a Member enquired if the impact also extended to the cross-border kindergarten children and if the EDB would reduce the resources allocated to schools due to the reduction in the number of enrolled students;
- (iv) A Member considered it inadequate for the EDB to count the number of students on the first day of school; instead, it should conduct routine surprise checks in schools to ensure that there were no "shadow students";
- (v) A Member said recently, a newspaper reported on the sudden death at home of a

15-year-old young man in Shan King Estate, and that he had actually dropped out of school for many years. According to the existing education policy, if a student was absent continuously for 7 days, the school should inform the EDB. This case suggested loopholes in the notification mechanism of schools and he/she viewed that the EDB should follow up more closely on the school attendances of students under 15 years old; and

- (vi) A Member said it was difficult to forecast the school-age population and hoped that the EDB could cooperate with other departments, such as the Housing Department, to deduce the school-age population in Tuen Mun District accurately.

34. Mr LAM of the EDB responded that the EDB was aware that the new education policy of the mainland might cause a reduction in the number of cross-boundary schoolchildren and was currently collecting statistics, the results would be reported once available. In addition, the EDB would send officers to the schools in mid-September to count the number of students. If a student was absent continuously for 7 days, the school could notify the Non-attendance Cases Team of the EDB via the notification system or by fax. The EDB expected the demand for school places for 2018-2019 would increase and had kept in touch with the Primary School Heads Associations for making the appropriate adjustments. The EDB had asked the Housing Department to estimate the increase in population as a result of the developments of Tsz Tin Tsuen and the public housing estate at Area 54, but the Housing Department said that it was difficult to forecast the age distribution of the population.

35. The Chairlady said that as Yan Tin Estate (near Tsz Tin Tsuen) was about to intake residents, Members were concerned about the schooling of the school-age children. She suggested to pass the matter to the Working Group on Education and Youth Services for follow up and requested the EDB to report the latest update to the working group. In addition, she said Members had enquired about the situation of redundant teachers and reduction of the number of classes, she requested the representative of the EDB to answer both questions when it was his/her turn to speak.

36. Members had another round of discussion and queries, the details of which are summarised below:

- (i) A Member said the new education policy of the mainland affected the schools of Hong Kong with varying degrees and the impact on the disadvantaged schools was more severe. She viewed that the EDB should collect statistics of the number of school-age children in various districts so that all the schools could plan ahead;

- (ii) A Member said the EDB required the schools to strictly comply with the notification mechanism, the "shadow students" were usually cross-boundary students and would only appear in the disadvantaged schools. For some students who had opted to study in the mainland, their parents still kept their school places in Hong Kong (did not go through the withdrawal formality) for fear that the children could not adapt to the new environment in the mainland. For a local student who changed schools, once he got enrolled in a new school, the new school would report it to the EDB so that his original school place would be replaced by someone else even if he did not go through the withdrawal formality in the original school; in the premise, "shadow student" would not appear. She believed that "shadow students" were only individual cases and there was no need for over-worrying; and
- (iii) A Member enquired whether the EDB had received other cases of "shadow students" and cases of schools of the district suspected of making fraudulent allowance claims from 2014 to 2016.

37. Mr LAM of the EDB responded that the primary schools in Tuen Mun District were currently faced with the problem of insufficient school places, so there were no redundant teachers. As for secondary schools, the EDB would use the "three-fold preservation policy" to keep the teaching posts for 3 years. The school place allocation team of the EDB was currently collecting statistics of the number of school-age children for projecting the impact on the schools of the district and would provide them for Members' reference once the statistics became available. He said that the EDB had not given any definition for "shadow students", but as far as he understood, the situation reported in the newspaper involved students who were no longer studying in a school, but the school did not report it to the EDB. According to the present guidelines, if a student was absent continuously for 7 days, the school must notify the EDB and consider whether it was reasonable to keep the school place for the student under the actual circumstances of the time.

38. A Member pursued further and asked if there were any schools in Tuen Mun District that had violated the notification guidelines between 2014 and 2016. He said recent newspaper articles kept on reporting about "shadow students" in Tuen Mun schools, for which both the Chief Executive and the Secretary for Education also showed concern. He requested the EDB to squarely respond to the aforesaid enquiry.

39. Mr LAM of the EDB responded that there were some cases in Tuen Mun in which the schools involved were suspected of failing to notify the EDB about students who had been absent continuously for 7 days, but as the cases were still under investigation, the information could not

be disclosed yet.

40. A Member viewed that the above case reflected the seriousness of the matter. The newspapers had been reporting about "shadow students" for nearly one week and accusing the school of fraudulent claims of allowance, but the EDB had not made any clarification all along. And the only answer given was that the case was under investigation, which was a behaviour of dereliction of duty.

41. The Chairlady said that the EDB could provide the relevant information to the SSC after the investigation had completed. In addition, Members were concerned with the problem of "shadow students" caused by cross-boundary students and viewed that to plug the loophole, the EDB should send officers to schools to count the number of students in other months as well, not just September. She said that the SSC could write to the EDB to reflect Members' concerns. Secretariat

(Post-meeting note: The said letter was sent on 31 October 2017.)

42. Members' third round of comments and enquiries on this issue are summarised as follows:

- (i) "Shadow student" was a shame to the education profession, deficiencies in the education policy had caused the shame, and the EDB was requested to provide all information to the SSC upon closing of the investigation;
- (ii) The existing notification mechanism required the schools to notify the EDB of student absences on their own volition, and that required self-discipline on the part of the schools. It was suggested that the EDB should enhance the conduct of surprise checks in schools and review the existing notification mechanism;
- (iii) A Member suggested that if the EDB and the Heads of Schools Associations had any new discussions or decisions with respect to the new education policy in the mainland, they were welcomed to report it to the SSC. In addition, he opined that the EDB should establish different policies for different situations in advance, instead of passively dealing with a problem after it arose;
- (iv) A Member reiterated that "shadow student" was just a special situation, so the public should not lose confidence on all the schools simply because of it;
- (v) A Member reported that the EDB sent officers to schools in July and September every

year to count the number of students in order to give the schools more time to recruit teachers. Some cross-boundary students did not go to the schools in Hong Kong as allocated; according to the policy of the EDB, in case a teacher became redundant due to the aforesaid reason, the school should preserve his teaching post for one year. Therefore, even if a school did not report to the EDB on absent students, no case of fraudulent claim for allowance would arise; and

- (vi) The reasons for some students not going to school for over 7 days were health or emotional problems, so the public should not erroneously think that students who were absent continuously for over 7 days were "shadow students".

43. Mr LAM of the EDB responded that he would reflect Members' opinions to the EDB and would report the latest developments to the SSC.

44. A Member considered the news report of "shadow students" a heavy blow to the image of the schools; the EDB should immediately come up to clarify the matter should the investigation reveal that the school in question did not make any fraudulent claim for allowance. He believed that most schools had followed the guidelines of the EDB and that it was necessary for the EDB to help regain the confidence of the public on the school management.

45. The Chairlady summarised that the Working Group on Education and Youth Services would keep contacting the relevant department for obtaining the statistics of school-age children upon the population intake of Yan Tin Estate. As the public was very concerned with the case of "shadow students", she requested the EDB to report to the SSC regularly on the updated data of the cross-boundary students and to consider Members' suggestion of conducting surprise checks on schools.

(D) **Report by the Social Welfare Department**
(SSC Paper No. 49/2017)

46. Members noted the contents of the report of the Social Welfare Department.

(E) **Report on Crime Figures in the Tuen Mun District**
(SSC Paper No. 50/2017)

47. Members noted the contents of the report of the Police Force.

VI. Any Other Business

(A) Visit to Tuen Mun Hospital

48. The Chairlady said that the HA had invited Members of the SSC and members of the TMDC to visit the Tuen Mun Hospital on 18 September for viewing the extension of the operating theatre. On that day, Members would also examine the traffic condition at the Tuen Mun Hospital Stop of the Light Rail. She also reminded Members who had accepted the invitation to be punctual on that day.

VII. Date of next meeting

49. There being no other business, the Chairlady closed the meeting at 11:21 a.m. The next meeting would be held on 14 November 2017.

Tuen Mun District Council Secretariat

Date: 31 October 2017

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