



NEWS ROUNDUP

20 OCTOBER 2023 [08:00 am]

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THE MANILA TIMES

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By: Catherine S. Valente

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Information and Knowledge Management Division

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Poorer countries in Africa are ahead of most rich nations when it comes to recognising clean air and its health benefits in their national climate plans - but their goals need to be backed with clear policies, action and finance, researchers said.

A new report named Nigeria, Ivory Coast, Mali, Togo and Ghana among the leading countries that have included air quality concerns in their climate action plans submitted to the United Nations, known as nationally determined contributions (NDCs).

The scorecard, released on Wednesday by the Global Climate and Health Alliance (GCHA), found that 14 of the top 15 countries were low- or middle-income nations, led by Colombia and Mali with Chile the only high-income country.

Yet overall, only 51 of the 170 NDCs - or fewer than a third of those analysed - referred to the health impacts of air pollution, the report said.

That means 6 billion people live in countries where the synergies between healthy air and climate have yet to be recognised in NDCs, it added. Several nations performing well on the scorecard also suffer high mortality from air pollution.

Air pollution - mostly caused by the burning of fossil fuels - causes more than 6.5 million deaths a year globally, a figure that is on the rise, according to a study published last year in the Lancet Planetary Health journal.

“Omitting air pollution considerations from NDCs is a missed opportunity for the planet, for people and for economies,” said Jessica Beagley, policy lead at the GCHA, a coalition of health and environment NGOs and health professional organisations.

In early December, the UN COP28 climate summit in Dubai will be the first to dedicate a day to health, as more countries recognise and seek to tackle the health risks associated with climate change, such as increases in heat stress and malaria.

The annual conference will also host a ministerial dialogue on tackling the interlinked problems.

But civil society activists expressed concern that the first draft of a COP28 declaration on climate and health - whose final version governments will be asked to sign up to - did not specifically refer to air pollution.

The GCHA report said clean air policies, such as transitioning to renewable energy and using cleaner cooking fuels indoors, have the potential to reduce health impacts and costs from problems like asthma and heart disease.

“Once you can start framing climate action in terms of health and dollars, that obviously builds much more support,” said Beagley.

She said that the NDCs provide a “snapshot” of national climate priorities and the scorecard awarded points for things like recognising air pollution’s health impacts, identifying actions to address it and weighing up the potential benefits.

Emissions blight cities

Nigeria’s latest NDC, for example, lays out steps to encourage cooking with cleaner fuels instead of firewood, which its government says could save forests and greenhouse gas emissions while avoiding 30,000 premature deaths by 2030.

Oladoyin Odubanjo, executive secretary of the Nigerian Academy of Science, said the NDCs are more “declarations of intent” than concrete policies, and called on governments to put those commitments into action.

Odubanjo said fumes from open-air cooking and emissions produced by vehicles in urban areas like Lagos, Nigeria’s largest city and commercial hub, are major sources of pollution, predisposing many to respiratory complications.

Despite significant health concerns, regulatory measures to curb sources of pollutants have been insufficient, he added.

“We see vehicles that are smoking like chimneys, that sometimes if you are not careful driving behind them, you can’t see the road,” he said. “Many people will tell you that by the time they get back home, they find it difficult to breathe, because they’ve been in the car.”

A 2020 World Bank study found that emissions from cars, industrial zones and generator exhaust fumes are responsible for poor air quality in Lagos, leading to high rates of premature deaths and illnesses, with serious impacts for local residents.

Uber driver Friday Omoniyi said he has battled a chesty cough that keeps him awake at night since he took up the gig work in the city of over 23 million residents last year.

“After driving on Lagos roads for a day, I can’t breathe well because of all the smoke from the cars - that is why I need to quit this job,” Omoniyi told Context, honking at several cars stuck in the morning commuter traffic.

Funding falls short

Audrey de Nazelle, a senior lecturer at Imperial College London’s Centre of Environmental Policy who was not involved in the GCHA report, described air pollution as “the greatest environmental risk factor for burden of disease worldwide”.

Focusing on health and air pollution in climate plans can promote more holistic and ambitious policies, she added - particularly in cities where tackling air pollution entails transforming the urban way of life.

For example, electrifying vehicles brings some benefits by lowering emissions and air pollution, but reducing car use overall also promotes healthier travel like walking and cycling, and can open up space for parks and trees, she added.

One major obstacle to tackling dirty air is the cost, especially given a lack of funding, the GCHA report noted, calling for urgent finance.

The recently released State of Global Air Quality Funding Report showed that just 1 per cent of all international development funding - about US\$17 billion - was expressly committed to targeting outdoor air pollution between 2015 and 2021.

And only 2 per cent of international public climate finance went towards tackling the problem in the same period, it said.

At the World Health Summit in Berlin on Tuesday, Maha Barakat, the UAE’s assistant minister of foreign affairs for health, said the COP28 declaration on climate and health would require “significant concentration” on finance.

The Dubai conference would also launch a set of finance initiatives on climate and health, she said, including a pipeline of investments that “can be scaled up to save lives and safeguard health while materially reducing carbon emissions and other forms of pollution”.

FINANCIAL TIMES

[Climate change forces Italy's farmers to focus on water](#)

By: Amy Kazmin

On an unseasonably hot October morning, biotechnologist Daniele Moscariello heads to a field of newly sprouting rocket (rucola) on his employer's 100-hectare farm in southern Italy. Once there, he checks his phone for an update on the soil moisture level.

Traditionally, the family-owned Rago Group used about 800 cubic metres of water per hectare per year to irrigate the rocket that it grows, along with other leafy greens such as baby spinach, chard and romaine lettuce, for consumers across Europe and the Middle East.

These days, though, the company is reducing its water usage with a new sensor and data analysis system called Hubfarm, which monitors soil moisture, temperature and humidity levels, and tells growers precisely when, and how much, to irrigate.

This system — developed by the Italian agribusiness association Confagricoltura and now available to its members — has helped the Rago Group cut its annual water use for cultivating rocket by 37 per cent, to about 500 cubic metres per hectare. After experimenting with 10 sensor-based monitoring stations, the company has ordered 50 more.

“The advantage is you can maximise water savings by monitoring the field every day,” says Moscariello, part of the farm's management team. “We can understand how much water you need at different levels and synchronise the volume of water to the needs of the plant.”

Finding innovative ways to reduce water use — and expand water storage capacity — is an urgent priority for Italy's vast agribusiness sector, especially after last year's severe drought. It devastated crops and led to disputes between farmers across the traditionally fertile Po river valley over the distribution of scarce water supplies.

Searing dry years are expected to become more common in Italy — one of the European countries most affected by climate change — because of its long Mediterranean coastline. Already, farmers are complaining of hotter, longer summers, while rains and Alpine snowfall are becoming far more erratic, putting water under mounting pressure.

Italian agribusinesses — which exported food and wine worth €60bn last year, up from €37bn in 2015 — are now looking hard at how to make the country's public irrigation system and their own farms more resilient.

“Many farmers have understood that water is, and it will be, a problem,” says Massimiliano Giansanti, Confagricoltura's president. “The rain is not the rain that we knew from the past years.”

According to Confagricoltura, Italy's public irrigation infrastructure has the capacity to store just 10 or 11 per cent of its annual rainfall. Though Italy built hundreds of large dams in the years after the second world war, poor construction and inadequate maintenance mean many are no longer fully operational.

About 40-50 per cent of irrigation water is lost in transit because of evaporation from the antiquated, open channels or because of cracks in the cement piping. Although none of these infrastructure deficiencies are new, they are being felt ever more acutely in a warming world. “In the past, no one thought about the use of water, because we had a lot of it,” Giansanti says. “People didn't understand what it means to manage water.”

Rain, when it does come, is often now heavily compressed into short periods. This spring, the fertile Emilia-Romagna region was hit by devastating floods, after receiving the equivalent of half its annual average rainfall in just 36 hours.

But while farming organisations agree that Italy will ultimately need more large-scale water storage facilities to capture rains when they come, such costly public projects could take decades to realise.

For example, Confagricoltura is now working with Italian water companies to prepare a proposal for the government for a new large-scale plant that could treat waste water and make it ready for use in irrigation — a practice common in many countries.

Italy theoretically permits such plants, too. However, in reality, stringent regulations have made it tough for projects to get off the ground, while farmers also remain anxious about such an approach.

“It's a problem for some farmers — they want to know who guarantees the water,” Giansanti says.

For now, Italy's €200bn, EU-funded Covid recovery plan has allocated €880mn to upgrade and modernise a third of the country's irrigation channels by 2026, and to install water meters so farmers pay only for the water they use.

At the same time, Italy's government is offering farmers tax credits for private investments they make in boosting their farms' sustainability, including efforts to cut water use.

Encouraged by these incentives, Italian cultivators last year invested €2.1bn in new farm management systems, innovative cultivation techniques, and machinery — up from €300mn on such items in 2018, Giansanti says.

In addition to making investments, many farmers are also looking to develop their own rainwater harvesting systems, after the government — following the drought and lobbying from farmers — pledged to ease the red tape that has previously stifled such initiatives.

Among those hoping to go down this path is Antonio Rago, production director at Rago Group, who says his farm hopes to collect the rainwater that falls on the tarpaulins that protect the fields of delicate rocket leaves from the elements. A small rainwater harvesting system — one that could collect water from 10 hectares — would cost about €30,000, for tubing and digging the storage pond.

Five months after applying for permission for the first trial systems, though, Rago is still waiting for authorisation to proceed.

“I think other farmers will also go in this direction. It's compulsory — there is no water,” he says. “But if we can recover the rainwater, I think we can survive.”

MANILA BULLETIN

[Aboitiz water firm's solar shift to pare energy costs, CO2 emissions](#)

By: Myrna M. Velasco

LIMA Water, a business unit of Aboitiz InfraCapital (AIC), has turned to solar technology for the energy requirements of the sewage treatment plant 2 (STP-2) for its water facility that is catering to the needs of LIMA Estate, an economic and industrial zone in Lipa-Malvar, Batangas that is also under the Aboitiz group.

The solar facility's installation had been completed in April this year, and the scale of electricity generation since then already topped 400 kilowatt hours, according to LIMA Water.

"The 99.9 kW solar panel installation is projected to significantly reduce LIMA Water's energy costs, with an estimated total power generation of 146 MWh (megawatt-hours) annually," the company emphasized.

The major stimulus to the company's energy usage switch to solar had not only been anchored on lower costs, but primarily on reducing carbon footprints so it becomes a global ally in mitigating climate change risks.

"Aside from reducing the facility's energy costs, the shift to renewable energy is expected to eliminate approximately 100 tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year, which is equivalent to the environmental benefit of planting over 3,500 trees, a significant contribution to the fight against climate change," the company stressed.

According to Hazele Manalo, general manager of LIMA Water, "harnessing the power of renewable energy is a fundamental part of LIMA Water's commitment to protect the environment and promote sustainability through innovative technologies."

She conveyed that their decision to opt for solar installation in their facility, "is a significant step towards addressing the pressing issue of carbon emissions to ensure a sustainable future for the next generations to come."

Manalo qualified that "LIMA Water's solar power initiative exemplifies the broader commitment of Aboitiz InfraCapital to drive sustainability across its various sectors."

As AIC Head of Water Business and Apo Agua President Eduardo Aboitiz had reckoned, the LIMA Water's solar panel project "is just one of the many sustainable practices and

initiatives that we have,” with him emphasizing that part of their sustainability strategy is to “ensure that we make use of our natural resources responsibly.

On the wider precept of energy-water nexus, Aboitiz similarly highlighted that their Apo Agua project in Davao is a tangible proof-of-concept that such management of resources and strategic approach to business can be viably done.

“This approach allows Apo Agua to fully operate its water treatment plant solely on renewable energy generated from the natural flow of water from its primary surface water source,” he narrated.

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

[Private firms with own RE facilities get more perks](#)

By: Alden M. Monzon

The Board of Investments (BOI) has issued an order making private firms with their own renewable energy (RE) facilities to power their operations eligible for more government incentives.

BOI Director Sandra Marie Reolizado said that through BOI Memorandum Circular No. 2023-006 signed last Oct. 16, businesses generating renewable energy will also be able to avail themselves of income tax holidays.

The order was issued as part of the government's broader efforts to further promote the use of renewable energy. For self-financed energy efficiency projects (EEP), the 5-percent Special Corporate Income Tax or the 5-percent tax on gross income earned will be waived based on the revenue of the project using the energy efficiency project.

To enjoy this, the existing project must already be registered under an investment promotion agency, such as the BOI or the Philippine Economic Zone Authority.

The income tax holiday incentive will also be limited to the prescribed period under the Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises Act, or until the recovery of 50 percent of its capital investment, excluding the cost of land and working capital of the EEP. Prior to this order, perks granted to renewable energy projects for companies' own use were limited to duty-free importation of capital equipment.

BOI chief Ceferino Rodolfo highlighted the case of the EEP at the Cebu Mitsumi Plant run by MinebeaMitsumi Inc. in the city of Danao, a 7.9 megawatt (MW) solar farm that can power 8 percent of the facility's energy needs and reduce carbon emissions by 6,833 tons per year.

Rodolfo said it is currently the largest solar power generation system among all Japanese companies in the country.

Operation of the solar farm began Thursday, after the ceremony marking the completion of the installation.

[Protesters at DA call for action on climate change, food security](#)

By: Luisa Cabato

A group of climate and environmental activists, on Thursday, marched and gathered in front of the Department of Agriculture (DA) Office in Quezon City to urge President Ferdinand “Bong Bong” Marcos Jr. to address issues concerning climate change and food security.

The protest was also in celebration of the Asia Day of Action on Food and Climate, which coincided with World Food Day (WFD) and the World Food Forum.

According to the Asian Peoples Movement on Debt and Development (APMDD), there were approximately 1,200 protesters, including women, farmers, and agricultural workers, who marched starting from the National Housing Authority.

Other participants were: Philippine Movement for Climate Justice, Sanlakas, Oriang, Aniban ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura, Bukluran ng Manggagawang Pilipino, Kilusan para sa Kabuhayan, Kalusugan, Kalikasan, at Katiyakan sa Paninirahan (K4K), Zone One Tondo Organization, Kongreso ng Pagkakaisa ng Maralitang Lungsod, Samahan ng Progresibong Kabataan, Partido Lakas ng Masa, and Metro Manila Vendors Alliance.

Protesters wore salakots and held banners and placards demanding protection against the food and climate crises.

An effigy that depicted Marcos as an “impostor scarecrow that pretends to help resolve the country’s food crisis but instead worsens it” was also paraded during the event, as posted by APMDD on the social media platform ‘X.’

“We demand sustainable food systems that prioritize domestic food needs and ensure adequate and nutritious food for all,” APMDD coordinator Lidy Nacpil said in a statement.

Agricultural losses caused by climate change are also the key driver of food insecurity in the Philippines, APMDD pointed out.

It also highlighted that the participating groups are calling for the cessation of corporate monopolization, agricultural liberalization, and industrial food production, as these are the “systemic roots” behind climate and food problems.

Moreover, K4K and the Metro Manila Vendors Association urged for the abolishment of the use of pesticides and herbicides, the democratization of land, seed, and technological ownership, and granting smallholder food producers the right to hold leadership in decision-making affairs in national and local agriculture.

A report by WFD said that the country has the highest food insecurity in Southeast Asia, thus affecting 50.9 million Filipinos, or nearly half of the national population.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

[PH gives more perks to firms using own renewable energy](#)

By: Kris Crismundo

The Board of Investments (BOI) is providing more incentives to registered projects that will be supplying their own electricity by putting up their own renewable energy (RE) facility.

Trade Undersecretary and BOI Managing Head Ceferino Rodolfo said at a virtual briefing Thursday that Memorandum Circular (MC) 2023-006 signed last Oct.16 updated the guidelines on giving incentives on energy efficiency and conservation (EE&C) projects under the special laws listing of the 2022 Strategic Investment Priority Plan (SIPP).

Rodolfo said the amendments to the BOI MC 2022-008 is a fulfillment of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr.'s promise during his visit to Tokyo last February to provide support to Japanese firms and other investors in the Philippines who will build their own renewables facilities to supply their own electricity demand.

The latest MC noted that self-financed energy efficiency projects (EEP) are entitled to the income tax holiday (ITH) incentive and duty exemption on importation of capital equipment, raw materials and spare parts or accessories.

“The ITH incentive shall be limited to the prescribed ITH entitlement period under the CREATE (Corporate Recovery and Tax Incentives for Enterprises) Act or until the recovery of 50 percent of its capital investment, excluding cost of land and working capital of the registered EEP, whichever comes first,” the MC read.

First taker

On Thursday, Japanese mechanical components and electronic devices manufacturer MinebeaMitsumi, Inc. installed its own solar power system in its factory in Danao City, Cebu.

MinebeaMitsumi president and chief executive officer Tatsuya Mori said in the same online briefing that the company has invested around PHP500 million for its own ground-mounted solar power generation with a capacity of 7.9 megawatt hours (MWh).

“We are very happy to be the first case to have these incentives which can be applied for our own use in Danao,” Mori told trade reporters.

In a separate statement, Sharp Energy Solutions Corporation (SESJ), the provider of the solar power system, said the solar farm will generate an estimated 12,806 MWh clean energy annually, making it the largest self-financed renewables for own consumption among Japanese firms in the Philippines.

“This equated to an annual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of roughly around 6,833 tons of carbon dioxide per year,” SESJ added.

MinebeaMitsumi Cebu Plant director Caesar Augusto also said the power generation from its own renewables will supply 8 percent of the factory’s total electricity consumption.

Moreover, Mori said the company plans to replicate the project in its two factories in Luzon, which could be rooftop solar farms.

Clean energy transition

Rodolfo also encouraged registered BOI firms to take advantage of the new guidelines on incentives under the new MC as part of the country’s transition to clean energy.

“The shift towards RE has been imperative,” Rodolfo said, adding that the Marcos administration creates policies, implements these projects and promotes these incentives.

“We are putting a premium in sustainability,” he added.

THE MANILA TIMES

[Marcos leaves PH for Asean-GCC meet in Saudi Arabia](#)

By: Catherine S. Valente

President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. on Thursday morning departed for Saudi Arabia to attend the inaugural summit between Southeast Asian leaders and Gulf states that is seen to boost efforts to address energy and food security in the region.

In a pre-departure speech before boarding his flight, Marcos said the 2023 Association of Southeast Asian Nations-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit (Asean-GCC) will serve as an important platform for the Philippines to highlight the need for cooperation in energy and food security, logistics, supply chains, digital information, free flow of goods, people and services, and enhancement and protection of rights of our overseas workers.

"We will emphasize our advocacy for rules-based international order to maintain peace, security and stability in our regions," Marcos said.

The President said he will also be meeting with the Filipino community in Riyadh to share with them important developments in the Philippines and to thank them for their invaluable contributions.

He noted that GCC countries are home to an estimated 2.2 million Filipinos working in critical fields.

"We will see to it that our constructive engagement with Asean and our partners will continue to serve our national interest and the well-being of the Filipino people," Marcos said.

The relationship between the Asean and the GCC dates back to 1990, and the summit aims to optimize cooperation between the two regional organizations, Foreign Affairs Assistant Secretary Daniel Espiritu said during a pre-departure press briefing on Monday.

"It is very important because the GCC is composed of highly developed Arab economies, and they are petrochemical powerhouses. They can help Asean in addressing energy and food security," Espiritu told reporters.

During the summit, Espiritu said the President is expected to put a positive word on his administration's flagship legislation – the country's newly established sovereign wealth fund.

"Part of the discussion could be the presentation of the Maharlika fund to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and its businesses, the protection of our nationals abroad, especially in terms of labor reforms being proposed for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and Arab assistance to the development of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (BARMM)," Espiritu said. The President is also expected to hold bilateral meetings with officials of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain to talk about the Philippines' diplomatic relationships with the two nations.

This will be Marcos' ninth foreign trip in 2023, and the 15th since he rose to the country's top post.

Countries he visited this year include China, Switzerland, Japan, United States (US), United Kingdom, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore.

The President is set to visit the US again in November for the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting, and the United Arab Emirates in December for the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

CCC IN THE NEWS:

DAILY TRIBUNE

[Phi to host 2024 Asia-Pacific ministerial conference on disaster risk reduction](#)

By: Lade Jean Kabagani

The Philippines is set to host the Asia-Pacific ministerial conference on disaster risk reduction or APMCDRR next year, according to the Climate Change Commission.

The CCC noted that the APMCDRR will serve as the primary regional platform where global leaders convene to identify solutions to disaster risk issues and promote coordination and cooperation on the implementation of the Sendai Framework in Asia and the Pacific.

It is scheduled to be conducted from 14 to 17 October 2024 here in Manila.

Hence, CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje expressed full support for the country's hosting role in the promotion of disaster risk reduction management on the global scene.

"The APMCDRR places the Philippines firmly at the locus of regional and global convergent action on climate change, disasters, and biodiversity loss through improved governance and strengthened collaboration toward resilience," said Borje, during the sidelines of the country's launching of APMCDRR, which also coincided with the observation of the International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction last 14 October.

The inauguration was attended and graced by Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction Mami Mizutori, Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., and Environment Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo Loyzaga.

Key representatives from the national government agencies, the private sector, and development partners have signed a partnership agreement on the promotion of the Asia-Pacific's disaster risk reduction conference.

The CCC, as one of the member agencies for the 2024 APMCDRR Inter-Agency Committee, said it recognizes the importance of pushing this conference, especially in the context of the escalating climate crisis.

he CCC said it has actively participated in the Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience Exhibit (Market Place), which was held as part of the 10th Top Leaders Forum.

The CCC's booth, which showcased local climate resilience initiatives during the exhibit, was explored mostly by students.

PHILIPPINE NEWS AGENCY

CCC cites civil society groups' role in climate change mitigation

The Climate Change Commission (CCC) has underscored the crucial role of collaboration with civil society organizations (CSOs) in pursuing climate action, particularly in resilience-building efforts.

“Our gathering today marks an initial step towards our partnership to further contribute to climate action,” CCC Vice Chairperson and Executive Director Robert E.A. Borje said in a public forum to mark the Social Development Week 2023 on Wednesday.

“For climate change, no task is too big or too small. Participation in programs and activities, like tree and mangrove planting and coastal cleanups – when done together, simultaneously – can make a huge difference,” he added.

With the theme, “Facing the Impact of Climate Change on Sustainable Development,” the forum was sponsored by the Caucus of Development NGO (non-government organization) Networks (CODE-NGO), one of the country’s largest groups of CSOs, composed of 12 national and regional networks representing 1,600 non-government organizations, people’s organizations, and cooperatives.

Borje said the CCC, under the guidance of President Ferdinand R. Marcos Jr., has established and strengthened partnerships with stakeholders, including civil society organizations, development partners, the private sector, and local government units through various coordination mechanisms, including the “Working to Empower Climate Action Network” or “WE CAN”, tailored specifically for civil society organizations.

“The Commission counts on your active involvement in this resilience-building effort. But we can do more if we continue to work together. The CCC champions advocacies where all of you can take part. May we continue to be part of the solution to this global governance challenge of our generation,” he said.

“In the end, all our actions and initiatives will count as means to save lives, protect our livelihoods, and secure our future. As partners, sama-sama tayong magkaisa tungo sa isang bagong bansang matatag (let’s work together towards a new strong nation),” Borje added.

The Department of Environment and Natural Resources Secretary Maria Antonia Yulo-Loyzaga also emphasized the importance of multistakeholder collaboration and partnerships.

“We aim for inclusive processes recognizing that every voice needs to be heard, and for partners to secure co-benefits and build resilience for a truly whole-of-society effort in addressing climate change,” she said.

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