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Issue Brief

Mission Sudarshan Chakra and the India–Israel Special Strategic Partnership

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Summary

Mission Sudarshan Chakra aims to enhance India's Air Defence (AD), Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) and aerial offensive capabilities. Ongoing global conflicts accentuate the Mission imperatives. Based on India's requirements and Israel's battle-tested capabilities, the India–Israel 'Special Strategic Partnership' has the potential to be a strategic catalyst for Mission Sudarshan Chakra.

Background

On 15 August 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced Mission Sudarshan Chakra, India's 'Shield and Sword'[1], to be achieved by 2035. Besides enhancing India's Air Defence (AD), Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) and aerial offensive capabilities, the Mission aims to fuse the cyber, cognitive and aerospace domains into a cohesive "kavach" capable of countering futuristic, complex, massed and mixed aerial threats through a unified strategy.[2] Given recent and ongoing conflicts, besides lessons from *Operation Sindoor*, the time-bound completion of the mission is critical to achieving national security objectives.

Six months into the project, during PM Modi's state visit to Israel on 25–26 February 2026, several news reports indicated Israel's willingness to share technology of its Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) systems with India, specifically the Iron Dome and the Iron Beam, with some reports suggesting Arrow and David Sling systems besides offensive weapons such as the Golden Horizon air-launched ballistic missile,[3] Spice munition guidance kits, Rampage air-to-ground missiles, Ice Breaker cruise missile and the supersonic AIR LORA Air Launched Ballistic Missile (ALBM) missiles. The two sides were expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for co-development and domestic manufacturing in India under a broader 'Strategic Alliance', thus adding a crucial element to Mission Sudarshan Chakra.[4]

Amidst these reports, the visit concluded with India–Israel bilateral relationship being elevated to a 'Special Strategic Partnership'. The joint statement issued subsequently frames defence cooperation around its November 2025 MoU, affirming a high-level technology-intensive partnership and roadmap based on co-development and co-production.[5] It also emphasises commitments in areas of cyber defence and an AI-security framework. The statement, unlike the news reports, does not mention any specific weapon platforms or concrete hardware/software projects.[6] The brief places these developments in context and underscores their importance for India's Mission Sudarshan Chakra.

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[1] Amrita Nayak Dutta, **"'Sudarshan Chakra' Will be India's Shield and Sword, But Needs Massive Integration, Says CDS Anil Chauhan"**, *The Indian Express*, 26 August 2022; Air Marshal P.K. Roy, **"Mission Sudarshan Chakra: India's Quest For a Multi-Layered Defence Shield"**, Chintan India Foundation, 20 August 2025.

[2] Sujan Chinoy and Sukhbir Kaur Minhas (Eds), ***Mission Sudarshan Chakra: India's Integrated Aerospace Command and Control System***, Pentagon Press, 2026, pp. 232–40; Lt Gen P.C. Katoch (Retd), **"India's Mission 'Sudarshan Chakra'"**, SP's Naval Forces, 26 August 2025.

[3] **"A Missile That Will Transform India's Air Power: Why Golden Horizon Could be PM Modi's Big Takeaway from Israel"**, *Moneycontrol*, 23 February 2026.

[4] Henry Bodkin, **"Israel to Share Iron Dome Defence Technology with India"**, *The Telegraph*, 25 February 2026; Surendra Singh, **"Israel, India Likely to Ink MOU on Tech Transfer for Iron Dome, Iron Beam, Advanced Missiles"**, *TNN*, 26 February 2026; **"Why The Iron Dome Tech Transfer Between Israel And India Is Big News For Atmanirbhar Bharat"**, *News18*, 26 February 2026.

[5] Seth J. Frantzman, **"India, Israel Sign New MOU on Defense Tech"**, *Breaking Defense*, 5 November 2025.

[6] **"India-Israel Joint Statement (February 26, 2026)"**, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 26 February 2026.

Israel's Offensive and IAMD System

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and the Israeli Air Force (IAF) pursue a combined strategy of swift, intelligence-driven offensive strikes by "integrating its air, land, sea, cyber and space capabilities with the Israeli home front command"[7] to maintain air superiority and deep-strike capabilities, paired with a robust and multi-layered IAMD shield. The latter is its popularly known Iron Dome system, along with Arrow, David Sling and now Iron Beam.

Israel's IAMD systems have evolved over the years to counter sustained and a wide variety of air and missile threats from state and non-state regional adversaries. The threat of short-range rockets and small projectiles fired by non-state actors began in the 1990s, with Hezbollah conducting its first rocket attack in 1996, and Hamas in 2001.[8] On 7 October 2023 alone, about 5,000 rockets were fired at Israel. About three months later, this figure went up to 12,000.[9] Later, in the 12-day war of 2025, Israeli systems countered about 550 ballistic missiles and around 1,000 drones launched by Iran.[10] In the ongoing conflict with Iran, till 3 March 2026, Israel has flown over 700 sorties dropping over 2,500 munitions, destroying at least 600 targets,[11] in addition to defending from drones and ballistic missiles launched from Iran and Hezbollah.[12]

In 2025, Israel's IAMD network added its fourth and lowest tier, the Iron Beam, designed to counter short-range rockets, mortars and drones using Directed Energy technology within a close-in range of 7–10 km. It replaced the Iron Dome, which now moves to the second tier, intercepting short-range rockets, artillery shells and UAVs up to 70 km. Operationalised in 2011, Iron Dome's manufacturer, Rafael, claims it has "intercepted 5000+ rockets with an over 90 per cent success rate".[13] David Sling, the mid-range system, was developed in 2017 and counters conventional threats from medium-range missiles, aircraft and UAVs. The uppermost tier is manned by the Arrow-2 & 3 series, also fielded in 2017, for long-range and ballistic missile defence. Arrow-3 achieved its first combat kill on 9 November 2023, shooting a

[7] Rohan Gunaratna, **"Israel's Enduring Offensive and Defensive Capabilities"**, LinkedIn, 13 December 2025.

[8] **"Israeli Air and Missile Defense"**, Missile Threat, 3 August 2021.

[9] Kylie Lobell, **"Under Constant Fire: How Many Rockets Have Terror Groups Shot Into Israel?"**, *Mid. East Journal*, 16 January 2024.

[10] Emanuel Fabian, **"The Israel-Iran War by the Numbers, After 12 Days of Fighting"**, *The Times of Israel*, 24 June 2025.

[11] Ari Cicurel, Yoni Tobin, Jonah Brody and Sarah Havdala, **"Operations Epic Fury and Roaring Lion: 3/2/26 Update"**, The Jewish Institute for National Security of America (JINSA), 2 March 2026.

[12] Annika Burgess, **"Iran Shows Ballistic Missiles and Drones Can Wreak Havoc Across Middle East"**, *RNZ*, 3 March 2026.

[13] **"Iron Dome Family"**, Rafael.

Houthi missile in the Red Sea region.[14] Barely nine days before, on 31 October, Arrow-2 had engaged another missile launched from Yemen.[15]

Behind these famed IAMD systems lies Israel's prowess in coordinating its war strategy—a national Command and Control (C2) network that fuses diverse sensors, discriminates threats, and enables rapid decisions, both offensive and defensive. Its IAMD framework integrates with its offensive component, including reconnaissance satellites, radars, UAVs, EW systems and ISTAR aircraft. It leverages Artificial Intelligence for a full-spectrum, command-and-control-enabled offensive freedom of action and strategic response across air, sea, land and space.[16]

Mission Sudarshan Chakra: The Imperatives

The prevailing theorising of Mission Sudrashan Chakra borrows heavily from India's success in countering aerial missile and drone attacks during *Operation Sindoor*. Alongside strengthening of this defensive capability, the Mission looks at building a robust industrial ecosystem for its offensive platforms—missiles, aircraft, air-launched munitions and drones—besides leveraging cyber and AI aspects. Future structures also seek to integrate the intelligence and cognitive domains into India's warfighting doctrine, an aspect highlighted by Israel's *Operation Rising Lion* against Iran in 2025 and inseparable from Mission Sudarshan Chakra. As the blueprint of the Mission is finalised and the roadmap rolled out, its implementation will see India address inherent challenges, referred to here as the challenge of the C3—Complexity, Continuity and Cost.

IAMD systems in general have often been described as highly complex and challenging to deliver—conceptually, technically and organisationally.[17] Countries seeking to defend their people, assets and lands from aerial threats cannot do so without aligning their offensive postures and broader military strategies with their foreign policy and protecting their forces deployed in theatres of operations outside their respective countries. Mission Sudarshan Chakra similarly needs to navigate the conundrum of its architecture, technologies, roadmap, public discourse and most essentially what remains classified, and what gets revealed, an aspect central to its

[14] Seth J. Frantzman, **"Arrow 3 Air Defense System Notches First Successful Intercept"**, *Breaking Defense*, 9 November 2023.

[15] Miguel Ortiz, **"Israel's Hypersonic Anti-ballistic Missile Was Used in Combat for the First Time"**, *We are The Mighty*, 17 November 2023.

[16] **"IAI's Systems Lead Multi-Domain Defense in Operation Rising Lion, Delivering Real-Time Threat Detection & Interception"**, IAI, 7 July 2025.

[17] **"Integrated Air and Missile Defence"**, RUSI Integrated Air and Missile Defence Conference 2025; Lt Col Emmanuel Delorme, Yannick Devouassoux and Luc Dini, **"A Collective Overview of IAMD through the Fifteenth 3AF International Conference on Integrated Air and Missile Defense"**, *Military Review—The Professional Journal of the U.S. Army*, March 2024.

very existence.[18] The second factor of continuity implies that the Mission is not an end state to be achieved by 2035, but rather a continuous process of enhancements alongside the capacity to sustain long-drawn-out conflicts. To explain, a Mini-Sudarshan Chakra already exists. This includes its doctrines, structures, weapon systems and industrial ecosystem. This system is ever ready, in operation, and the Mission seeks to enrich it.

The third underlying factor to the success of the Mission is Cost—the means to ensure adequate and consistent investments and funding, as IAMD systems are very expensive to build. The US's Golden Dome initiative, for example, is expected to cost US$ 175 billion.[19] This cost factor has driven most countries to adopt an approach of ensuring AD through collaboration alongside domestic investments, such as the Germany-led European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI), which seeks to improve European IAMD by participation of 24 countries, with Turkiye and Greece joining in 2024.[20]

Alongside the ESSI is the Diamond Initiative (Delivering Integrated Air and Missile Operational Networked Defences), set up by the UK with North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies to step up cooperation on integrating and interoperating different AD systems across the NATO alliance.[21] Outside of such collaborative IAMD structures, countries around the world have invested in multiple systems, relying on a diverse mix that also allows indigenous production. Countries in the Middle East, such as Saudi Arabia, have entered into a US$ 15 billion Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system contract, alongside Patriot upgrades, investments in South Korean and Russian systems, and nascent efforts to develop domestic industry through Saudi Arabian Military Industries (SAMI), partnering with Lockheed and Raytheon under its Vision 2030.[22]

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has recently signed a US$ 35 billion defence cooperation MoU with South Korea in areas including AD and the air force, alongside partnerships with the US for systems such as THAAD. South Korea has similarly been improving its indigenous IAMD setup through a collaborative MoU with Northrop Grumman, funding R&D with a 7.5 per cent increase in its defence

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[18] Sujan Chinoy and Sukhbir Kaur Minhas (Eds), ***Mission Sudarshan Chakra: India's Integrated Aerospace Command and Control System***, no. 2.

[19] Mike Stone and Jeff Mason, **"Trump Selects $175 billion Golden Dome Defense Shield Design, Appoints Leader"**, *Reuters*, 21 May 2025.

[20] **"European Sky Shield Initiative: Strengthening European Defense with Türkiye"**, SETA, 10 February 2025; **"Türkiye to Strengthen ESSI's European Air Defense with Locally-Made Missile Systems"**, Defense News Army, 10 February 2025.

[21] Claire Mills, **"UK Defence in 2025: Integrated Air and Missile Defence"**, Research Briefing, House of Commons Library, 13 June 2025.

[22] **"Saudi Military Industries Highlights"**, 2021; Shir Perets, **"Saudi Arabia Activates US THAAD to Deter Looming Iran Missile Threat"**, *The Jerusalem Post*, 3 July 2025.

budget.[23] In 2025, Poland invested in the US for Patriots,[24] alongside a US$ 3.5 billion anti-drone system in collaboration with Norway's Kongsberg.[25] In effect, these IAMD collaborations seek to accelerate the base capacity and stimulate economic growth of the domestic ecosystem, as well as to enhance multilateral interoperability.

Though India has chosen not to align with any regional/international security partner for its IAMD framework, the related industrial sector has been steadily evolving under the vision of 'Atmanirbharta', with indigenous manufacturing and international collaboration through Joint Ventures (JVs), co-development and tech transfers. Some of the foreign partners active in the area of AD systems include the European Airbus (platform support for DRDO's 'Netra MK II AWACS'),[26] Almaz-Antey through S-400 MRO facilities, air defence missile systems, radars and automated control systems,[27] Kalyani Strategic Systems JV with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for indigenous production of Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missile (MR-SAM), Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Safran deal for co-development of 120–140 Kn thrust engine for Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), MBDA for missiles and related technology development,[28] Swedish company Saab for Giraffe radars via L&T,[29] Thales–Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) collaboration for radars, including Airborne Interceptor radars for fighters, etc.[30]

What Does Israel Contribute?

In this context, if one were to study areas specific to Mission Sudarshan Chakra, Israel and its companies have invested in India through direct acquisitions and partnerships for a host of defensive and offensive capabilities. Amongst the earliest systems supplied were the Heron and Searcher Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and *Litening* electro-optical targeting pods, enabling laser-guided bombs for the Mirage2000 aircraft. Both deliveries hastened India's advantage in the Kargil War.[31]

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[23] Joon Ha Park, **"Seoul Raises Military Budget 7.5% for 'Self-reliant Defense' Against North Korea"**, *NK News*, 3 December 2025.

[24] **"Poland to Sign Air Defence Deal with US Worth Almost $2 billion"**, *Reuters*, 31 March 2025,

[25] **"Poland Signs Deal to Build €3.5 bln 'Breakthrough' Anti-drone Defense System"**, *Kyiv Post*, 30 January 2026.

[26] Ethan M. Encarnacion, **"India Builds Its Own Eye in the Sky With Netra MKII AWACS"**, *The Defense Post*, 23 July 2025.

[27] **"Defence Ministry Identifies Domestic Firm for S-400 Maintenance"**, *The Hindu*, 11 July 2025.

[28] **"BDL & MBDA Sign Agreement to Establish Advanced Short Range Air-to-Air Missile Facility in India"**, BDL India, 17 August 2021.

[29] **"Saab Launches Five New Radars for Total Air Domain Awareness"**, SAAB, 12 May 2014.

[30] **"BEL-Thales System"**; **"Thales Awards SFO Technologies RBE2 Radar Wired Structures Contract for Rafale Under Make in India"**, *Thales*, 15 December 2025.

[31] Nicolas Blarel, **"Planes, Drones, Missiles: How Kargil Changed Indo–Israeli Relations"**, *The Caravan*, 18 January 2015.

Since then, the *Litening* pod has been made "substantially in India"[32] with Defsys, a Rafael partner.

The foundational technology for radars in India's indigenous BMD Anti-Ballistic programme also came from the Israeli IAI/Elta Green Pine systems, which subsequently led to the development of the Swordfish/Long-Range Tracking Radar (LRTR) series.[33] Amongst missile systems, MRSAM is co-produced in India, while SPYDER and Derby Air-to-Air Missile (AAM) used on the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) are supplied by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.[34] The Indian Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) acquisition, preceding the indigenous Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) programme, features Israeli EL/2090 Phalcon Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radars mounted on an IL-76 platform.[35]

In the category of loitering munitions and attack drones, Sky Striker and Harop were reportedly used in India's counter-insurgency operation in *Operation Sindoor*. While the former is co-produced in Bangalore by Alpha Design and Elbit Security Systems of Israel, the latter has been acquired from them.[36] The Adani-Elbit facility in Hyderabad currently produces the Hermes 900 MALE UAV, also known as the Drishti-10 Starliner, which is used extensively for maritime and border surveillance.[37] In fighter aircraft weaponry, the Kalyani Rafael Advanced Systems (KRAS) JV in Hyderabad is reportedly producing the Spice 2000 bombs used in the Balakot strikes, as well as missiles for the Barak/MRSAM.[38]

To achieve a significant enhancement of the Indian Air Force's (IAF's) long-range offensive capability, India had inducted IAI-manufactured Rampage air-to-surface missiles in 2024 on its Su-30 MKI platforms, along with MiG-29 and Jaguar fighters. Following their validation in *Operation Sindoor*, it was reported that additional orders were underway, alongside consideration of joint domestic production under the 'Make in India' initiative.[39] News reports from January 2026 indicate further acquisition of SPICE-1000 precision-guidance kits, additional Rampage missiles, AIR

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[32] Vishal Thapar, **"Used in Balakot Air Strike, Spice Bombs & Litening Pods Being 'Made in India'"**, *SP's Aviation*, Issue 3, 2019.

[33] Wg Cdr Anand Sharma, **"Ballistic Missile Defence for India, Necessity, Imperatives and Implications"**, Issue Brief, National Defence and Aerospace Power, 15 April 2009.

[34] **"SPYDER Missile :- India's Short and Medium Range Air Defence System"**, *Indian Defence News*.

[35] **"Prioritisation of AWACS for the IAF"**, CAPS, 31 August 2022.

[36] Anushka Sikka, **"Op Sindoor-The Emergence of India's Drone Doctrine"**, Drone Federation India, 23 May 2025.

[37] **"Adani Unveils Drishti 10 Starliner: India's First MALE Drone"**, Bots & Drones India, 16 January 2024.

[38] Vishal Thapar, **"India Signs $43.2 Million Contract for Spice Smart Bombs"**, *SP's Aviation*, 7 June 2019; **"Hyd-based KRAS Bags $100 Million Order for 1,000 Israeli Barak Missiles"**, *The News Minute*, 12 July 2019.

[39] **"After Op Sindoor, India Plans Major Procurement of Israeli Rampage Missiles"**, *Business Standard*, 2 March 2026.

LORA ALBM, and the Ice Breaker stand-off air-to-surface missile, among other systems, vide Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) approvals in December 2025.[40] The Ice Breaker series has already found an industrial base in India, with Bharat Dynamics Limited (BDL) signing a MoU with Rafael Advanced Defense Systems to support its production.[41]

Aside from this agreement, Rafael had also invested in Centum Electronics, a Bengaluru-based company, to advance collaboration on Electronic Warfare systems for the Armed Forces, including Spectrum dominance, Situational Awareness, and AI-based Intelligence Suite/Decision Support System.[42] The recent tie-up between IAI and DCX Systems on advanced aerospace electronics and radar technologies,[43] and a potential deal to acquire converted Boeing 767 aircraft for air-to-air refuelling roles, with part of the work being done in India, adds to these developments.[44]

In the space sector, the launch of India's first indigenously made Radar Imaging Satellite (RISAT-1) was preceded by RISAT-2, which featured an Israeli-origin X-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR).[45] The ISRO–Israel Space Agency (ISA) partnership under the elevated partnership enables the combination of complementary capabilities in payloads and heavy-lift launch for both countries. These acquisitions and co-developments indicate not just crucial and timely assistance from Israeli technology in developing India's indigenous R&D and industrial ecosystems, but also lay the groundwork for further complementarity of capabilities.

The Way Ahead

Progress on Mission Sudarshan Chakra was made public on 29 November 2025, with project contours drawn up under the Chairman, DRDO, along with the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, to Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC), HQ Integrated Defence Staff (IDS).[46] The role of DRDO in steering the Mission's technological roadmap was reinforced in the Raksha Mantri's address on DRDO

[40] Lt Gen P.C. Katoch (Retd), **"Air LORA & Ice Breaker Missiles"**, *SP's Aviation*, 27 January 2026.

[41] Rahul Udoshi and Sunil Nair, **"Aero India 2025: BDL, Rafael Sign Ice Breaker Agreement"**, Janes, 13 February 2025.

[42] Ami Rojkes Dombe and Eyal Boguslavsky, **"Rafael Expands Strategic Ties in India with New Defense Agreements"**, *Israel Defense*, 13 February 2025.

[43] **"IAI and DCX Announce the Establishment of a New JV in India"**, IAI, 21 April 2025.

[44] Rojoef Manuel, **"Israel Emerges as Sole Bidder for India's $900M Military Tanker Aircraft Deal"**, *The Defense Post*, 28 October 2025.

[45] Ajey Lele, **"India Launches Radar Satellite"**, Commentary, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), 27 April 2012.

[46] **"'Work Has Started on Adding Value to Multi-layered Air Defence System': Defence Secretary on 'Mission Sudarshan Chakra'"**, *ANI*, 29 November 2025.

Day.[47] As has been elucidated earlier, building the Mission Sudarshan Chakra goes beyond airborne fighter interceptors, ground-based SAMs, radars and Counter Unmanned Aerial System (CUAS) grids. It involves enhancement of the entire constellation of aerial vectors—Long range air-launched missiles, UAVs, Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), Satellites, Anti-Satellite (ASAT) capabilities, to name a few—along with cyber offensive systems, hardening of defences and AI integration. While the indigenous Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS), along with *Akashteer* and Indian Maritime Situational Awareness System (IMSAS), lays the foundation, blueprints for further upgradations are being planned to achieve time-bound targets.

With Israel's already well-established presence in these sectors, the renewed cooperation significantly energises indigenous industrial efforts. Sudarshan Chakra was conceived as a national mission blending indigenous innovation with selective partnerships, such as "Make in India projects, imports and IDDM programmes". [48] Israel's innovative niche technologies and battle-proven systems complement India's industrial manufacturing capacity and entrepreneurial and talent competencies.[49] The bilateral defence cooperation of almost three decades has delivered credible outcomes in each conflict/standoff since Kargil.

Conclusion

It was *Operation Sindoor* that led to India's leadership announcing Mission Sudarshan Chakra. The ongoing global conflicts accentuate the Mission imperatives, each day bringing newer challenges. Based on India's requirements and Israel's battle-tested capabilities, this renewed partnership has the potential to be a strategic catalyst for India's decade-long Mission by substantially, if not completely, expanding the relevant technology/systems base and production at scale. Israel is also among the few militaries that executed a near-perfect multi-domain offensive in 2025, *Operation Rising Lion*, combining cognitive, electronic warfare and special operations with airpower. Though not articulated, it can be suggested that this partnership also brings in this operational wisdom.

In summary, Israel brings battle-tested expertise to make the Sudarshan Chakra more effective—a system that not only defends but also enables precise retaliation and advances India's strategic autonomy.

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[47] Saurabh Trivedi, **"DRDO to Play Key Role in Sudarshan Chakra Air Defence Initiative: Rajnath Singh"**, *The Hindu*, 1 January 2026.

[48] **"'Work Has Started on Adding Value to Multi-layered Air Defence System': Defence Secretary on 'Mission Sudarshan Chakra'"**, no. 46.

[49] **"India-Israel Joint Statement (February 26, 2026)"**, no. 6.

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