

Justice and Peace

Newsletter of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (Thailand)

2005 Issue #1

Table of Contents

CCJP On The Move 2

Feature

Situation in the South ... Road
to Peace is still Uncertain? 9

**Of Thousands of Words,
Images and Impressions..... 11**



The JP Newsletter is published twice a year by the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, Thailand (CCJP.) It features the work of the CCJP and of the human rights situation in Thailand. Bylined articles do not necessarily reflect the official position of the CCJP.

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Of Thousands of Words, Images and Impressions

This issue of JP Newsletter begins with announcement that Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace has a new secretary general. She is Ms. Achara Somsangsuang. She has replaced Associate Professor Dr. Walai Na Pombejr since June this year. She had worked with CCJP from 1985 - 1997 (8 years in education for justice and peace desk, and 5 years as co-ordinator). She resigned to continue her master study in sociology at Asian Social Institute in the Philippines from 1997 - 2000. After finishing her post graduate study, she came back to Thailand and was in charge of education for development under Catholic Council of Thailand for Development from 2000 - 2002. Later, she joined Society of Jesus in Thailand for 3 years in Social Ongoing Formation Centre to promote lay participation and roles in the Church and society.



Ms.Achara Somsangsuang ; a new secretary general of CCJP.

This second return in the period is when CCJP also grows up like a matured adult. Hardship from the work in the past has now become successes contributed by internal factor of unending attempt in the operation to accomplish the goal with the same one heart of lay people who are its staff members. It also got good co-operation from its target group who are now aware of and accept the mission of promoting justice as the instrument and goal to materialise and fulfil the plan of God. Given this cause, the balance resulted from both internal factor of CCJP and outside people of good will is the driving force pushing CCJP to move onward as an organisation mandated to motivate practice of love and justice as the sole truth that human beings are endlessly searching for.

Holy Mass to Celebrate World Day of peace at Assumption Cathedral, Bangrak



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1. Fr.Kriangsak Kovitvanit, the parish priest, was the principal celebrant.

2. Christians celebrate the mass.

On the occasion of World Day of Peace for 2005, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace has co-organised a Mass to celebrate World Day of Peace with parish priest of Assumption Cathedral on Sunday 16, 2005. Fr. Kriangsak Kovitvanit, the parish priest, was the principal celebrant. He has given sermon based on contents of peace message of John Paul II on the theme “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” to motivate parishioners to realise the importance of World Day of Peace and be aware of a need to take part together in building peace. Many people took part in this Mass.

Courtesy Call on Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino

On January 10, 2005, Staff and board members of Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace had an opportunity to pay courtesy call on Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino, president of Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace on the occasion of his visit to Thailand. In this meeting, Cardinal Martino spent some time with CCJP team comprising Associate Professor Walai Na Pombej, interim secretary general of CCJP, Mr. Sarawut Pratoomrat, board member, Ms. Katalee Sikarangul, board member, Ms. Achara Somsaengsuang, current secretary general of CCJP and its staff members. CCJP shared ideas and reported its work on justice and peace and human rights. The Cardinal was also kind to take the group to visit a chapel in the Nunciature, which he designed by himself, which was very impressive to CCJP group.



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1. Cardinal Renato Raffaele Martino ; President of Pontifical Council of Justice and Peace spent some time with CCJP teams.

2. Visited a chapel in the Nunciature.

3. Took pictures together.



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Co-organisation of a seminar with the network of religious faithful under the theme “Religious Policies and Future of Thai Society” (After General Election)



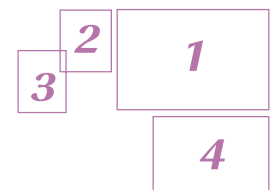
On January 20, 2005, Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace together with the network of religious faithful comprising Sekiya Dharma Group, Muslim Organisations Council of Thailand, network of Buddhist relations for international society, Political Science Faculty, Thammasat University, Post Today Newspaper and Bangkok Post have co-organised a seminar on “Religious Policies and Future of Thai Society (After General Election) at a small auditorium, Thammasat University, Tha Phrachan. Participants were Catholic priests and religious, Muslim leaders, social activists, students and people in general, altogether 150 people.

This seminar was organised before general election scheduled for February 6, 2005 to allow leading political parties, such as Democrat, Chart Thai and Mahachon to declare their visions on religion and concepts on ethics and morality in society. For people, they learned information for their consideration of clear choice of representatives. Thai Rak Thai refused to send its delegate to take part in this seminar. In declaring visions and policies on religions, each political party indicated that it realised the significance of religion, ethics and morality, and, thus, disagreed with government policies on lottery, casinos and soccer betting, since they spoil good values of Thai society. These political parties also pledged to co-operate with all networks in Thai society.

Then, representatives of three religions have shared their ideas and recommended policies on religions to the participating political parties, demanding politicians to apply religious teachings in their various political activities. They also asked politicians to realise the significance of policies on



development and capacity building of human beings, especially teachers whose role is to teach and form students with morality and ethics.



1. (left-right) Nikorn Chamnong ; director of Chart Thai, a representative of the democrat party, Venerable Kittisak Kittisopano ; Sekiya Dharma Group and Apichart Thong-Yu ; the Mahachon spokesperson declared their visions.

2. Banyat Banthadthan ; president of Democrat Party.

3. Niti Hasan ; president of the Council of Muslim Organizations of Thailand.

4. Buddhist monks joined the seminar.

Co-organisation of a public discussion on “Tsunami: Lessons on Signs of the Times” with Social Ongoing Formation Centre

Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, in close collaboration with Social Ongoing Formation Centre, co-organised a public discussion on “Tsunami: Lessons on Signs of the Times” to present impacts on people and local communities after Tsunami. The public discussion also aimed to provide an in-depth reflection on the phenomenon of Tsunami, signs of liberal age to society, as well as promoting co-operation to renew interrelationship between human beings and the nature according to religious teachings. This public discussion was held on March 2, 2005 at Assumption Personnel Development Centre in Thonglor Soi 25 with about 70 participants who are members of various religious congregations and organisations.

Panellists in this public discussion include Venerable Phra Paisarn Wisalo, abbot of Wat Pa Sukato Temple in Kaengkhlor District, Chaiyapoom Province, Ms. Siriwan Santisakuldharm, chairperson of SIGNIS Asia, and Fr. Somkiat Trinikorn, assistant to bishop for personnel of Bangkok Archdiocese.

Ms. Siriwan Santisakuldharm, who had visited the affected areas after Tsunami and reported to her central office, has presented her perspective through photos of assistance of Catholic organisations. She talked about this experience that she was saddened after seeing the scenes of loss,



Ms. Siriwan Santisakuldharm told participants of her experience which came as part of the Thai Church's response to the disaster.

pain and tragedy of the victims. Children and old people were affected by Tsunami tidal waves. Even today, those living in temporary shelter still had trauma and wound inside their hearts. These wounds could only be healed by love, affection, care, understanding and accompaniment.

“The role of the Catholic Church in helping the victims was focussed on spiritual assistance rather than material because of trauma and internal wounds are much greater than financial or any material therapy. Tsunami disaster reflects, on the one hand, that human beings take material or money as the lead in their life. These materials lead them to great destruction. Therefore, our question is how to teach our children to really understand where is the happiness and value of life”, said Siriwan.

Venerable Paisarn Wisalo, abbot of Wat Pa Sukato, who visited the affected areas to give moral support and religious exhortation reflected that Tsunami was not a reaction or revenge of the nature, or a punishment on human beings. Tsunami was a natural phenomenon. It was like sneezing or natural movement, which has been like this for several centuries. It was human beings who stayed in the wrong place. This was a consequence of development based on money and capitalism. This mainstream worsened the situation because of lack of preparedness, prevention nor awareness of safety. He recommended that, *“While we are worried that our youth like shopping, spending and fast food, Thai youth in fact have many positive elements. They are very generous and hospitable. We have to take this opportunity to attract young people to be volunteers continually and systematically in a wider circle. This might lead Thai society to move into a new era as it was*



(left-right) Fr. Somkiat Trinikorn ; assistant to bishop for personnel of Bangkok Archdiocese and Venerable Phra Pisarn Wisalo ; abbot of Wat Pa Sukato Temple in Kaengkhlor District, Chaiyapoom Province.

over three decades ago. The event of October 14, 1973 has changed Thai society and consciousness of Thai people. If we use Tsunami as a starting point to drive and balance for change in consciousness. New generations could be changed by this Tsunami disaster.”

Fr. Somkiat Trinikorn, assistant to bishop for personnel of Bangkok Archdiocese said that, *“Tsunami stimulated reflection and led to a belief that cracks on earth surface could be forecasted and alerted in advance. Yet, there are several cracks that take human lives and hit no less than Tsunami. These cracks are division, exploitative economic war, liberalism and capitalism that could harm each other and affect human life everyday. However, these cracks could be controlled, known in advance and negotiable. Cracks of war and hatred could be resolved. Yet, it is a question why humanity does not want to resolve. Tsunami is a sign of the time telling humanity that it is time for humanity to read this sign, present life, economic conditions, cracks resulted from war and community, or in smaller unit like family institution. We should be alert to protect life from cracks emerging from the smallest nucleus of society to build justice and peace, and to prevent cracks and division, which could result greater damages and destruction than natural disaster.”*

Co-organisation of a seminar on “From Gaudium et Spes to World Social Forum: the Church and the World” with Social Ongoing Formation Centre and Cardijn Lay Community with Mr. Francisco Whitaker Ferreira, secretary general of National Commission on Justice and Peace of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Brazil as guest speaker.

Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace, in close collaboration with Social Ongoing Formation Centre and Cardijn Lay Community, co-organised a seminar on “ From Gaudium et Spes to World Social Forum: the Church and the World” with Mr. Francisco (Chico) Whitaker Ferreira, secretary general of National Commission on Justice and Peace of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Brazil as a guest speaker and Mr. Rungrote Tangsurakit, treasurer of CCJP as moderator and interpreter. The presentation was organised on May 24, 2005 at Assumption Personnel Development Centre, Soi Thonglor. There were 20 participants who are religious men and women, Catholic business people, school administrators and teachers, personnel of Catholic organisations under the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Thailand and mass media.

Chico is a Brazilian thinker and social activist. When he was a student, he joined Young Catholic University Students Movement in Brazil. He was also a board member of Workers’ Party. At the end of Second Vatican Council, he worked closely with Dom Helder Camara, who was then a secretary general of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Brazil, and Paulo Freire, a thinker and educator. Chico has a part in sharing ideas on drafting of Gaudium et Spes. At the end of 1960s, he was deported by the dictatorial government of Brazil and spent his life in Europe working as a director of a development project of Catholic Committee against Famine and Development (CCFD). In 2000, he co-founded World



Mr. Francisco Whitaker Ferreira ; a Brazilian thinker and social activist.

Social Forum, which is an international movement of popular sector opposing neo-liberalism. Presently, he is a secretary general of National Commission for Justice and Peace under the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Brazil.

Chico has told his experience in his social involvement, starting from his student age. He got an inspiration from a French Dominican with a name of Louis Joseph Lebert, who was working in Brazil and wrote a book entitled “An Examination of Conscience for Modern Catholics”. This book talks about reflection of conscience of Catholics in the modern world. He has found widening gap between the rich and the poor in Brazil where there were as many as 30 million poor people. A big number of slums sprang up in urban areas. He talked about the Sacrament of Confession (Reconciliation) that **“We could not only go for confession when we have sinned. It is also a sin if we see anything wrong in society but do not do anything to correct it.”** This passage made him to be interested in social problems. People who had influence on his social involvement

include Dom Camara who was also involved in social action with the poor, and Paulo Freire who was interested in education of the oppressed and the poor and developed a concept on equality of mutual learning between teacher and students.

Chico said that Brazil in 1960s experienced a lot of problems in politics due to dictatorial government. The Church and the people came out to demand justice and change in social structure and land reform. At that time, Pope John 23 has called the Second Vatican Council, in continuation of the first council, to explore the role of the Church and the world. During this period, lay people have played significant role in the drafting of Gaudium et Spes. Then, in 1964, Brazil had a coup d’ etat and Chico was deported to France and Chile. Later in 1982, he could go back to Brazil.

“On day, Dom Camara asked me to help his work. At that time, Pope John 23 was trying to push the Church in different places to have their plans for the future on how they like the Church to be, and see what the Gospel has to tell



(right) Mr. Rungrote Tangsurakit ; treasurer of CCJP As moderator and interpreter.

us. *The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Brazil tried to develop its plan for domestic church, following the teachings of Vatican II with a new understanding of the Church. It was a plan that did not exclusively come from above for local churches and other parts of the Church to follow. This plan, however, supported the Church springing from local context, which was different. Meetings were held to understand what the Church was, what the role of bishops, priests, religious and lay people should be. They were meetings where all parties were involved. The Church after Vatican II has tried to understand and apply teachings of the Council. However, not all parts were successful. Planning of the Church must understand objectives and identify methods to successfully materialise the plan.*"

Chico said that the Catholic Church had 6 main dimensions. 1. The

Church is a community of faith with fraternity and friendship. 2. Proclaim the Gospel. 3. Learn, study and understand the Bible deeply. 4. Offer rituals with Holy Mass of thanksgiving and celebration of life. 5. She promotes ecumenism and inter-religious dialogue with the separated churches and other religions, even those with no religion but are people of goodwill to help create society. 6. The Church is a prophet telling what is right or wrong in society, and takes part in changing what is wrong. He said all the 6 dimensions should go together. No dimension could be neglected. However, the Church in the present day focussed

only on spirituality, but is weak in other dimensions. The Church in Brazil gives priority to all these 6 dimensions, working together with the people to fight dictatorial government. The churches in many other places have changed themselves to work side by side with the poor.



One of the Sisters who was interested in this seminar asked some question to Chico.

Human Rights Education Project Organised a Workshop on Human Rights for Catholic School Teachers.



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1. Teachers from Catholic schools in Archdiocese of Bangkok joined the activities in the training workshop for teachers.

2. Ms. Sumitra Pongsathorn, one of the resource persons in Human Rights Training.

Human rights education project of Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace organised a training workshop for teachers of Catholic schools in Archdiocese of Bangkok on February 3 - 5 at Baan Phu Waan, Sampran, Nakhonpathom Province. This workshop was organised

for 17 teachers in social study, religion and culture, Thai language, music, science and mathematics. In this workshop, the teachers have shared their ideas and took active part in different activities. They were also interested to have intensive training on "rights of children".

On June 4 - 5, the project has also organised training human rights study for 45 teachers of St. Theresa School in Nong Jork. They are teachers in kindergarten, elementary and secondary level. Resource persons were Associate Professor Dr. Walai Na Pombejr and Mr. Nuttawut Buapratoom, a lawyer from Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights Foundation.

This training was quite successful. The teacher trainees have learned and understood human rights, rights of children and how to write integrated teaching programme. However, since time was limited, the training focussed on inputs and discussion.

This training on human rights for teachers of St. Theresa School in Nong Jork will be organised in three sessions for a total number of 112 people. The second session is scheduled for September 3 - 4, and the last one on September 10 - 11, 2005.



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1. Asst.Prof.Dr.Walai Na Pombejr provided understanding on basic rights.
2. Mr.Nuttawut Buapratoom ; a lawyer from Centre for the Protection of Children's Rights Foundation provided understanding on rights of children.
3. Teachers of St.Theresa School in Nong Jork.



Co-organisation a seminar on “From Lawyer Somchai Neelapaijit and Charoen Wat-aksorn to Venerable Supot Suwajoe ... Who’s Next?” with Sekiya Dharm Group and Muslim Organisations Council of Thailand

On June 22, 2005, this seminar was held at 14 October 1973 Memorial Centre. Panellists were Mr. Sulak Sivaraksa, a senior scholar, Mr. Niti Hasan, chairperson of Muslim Organisations Council of Thailand, Fr. Vichai Poketawee, Catholic representative, with Mr. Santisuk Soponsiri as a moderator. The panellists have reflected on their respective faith of 3 religions and morality regarding the violence. They demanded religious organisations to express their clear stand against wrongdoing and human rights violation with an aim to seek support and motivate responsible parties to carry out their tasks with sincerity and justice.

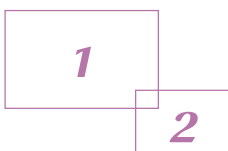
In this discussion, each panellist has expressed their opinions on judicial procedures of public sector in dealing with the accused. It seemed, according to the panellists, that the government, especially the Prime Minister, was not sincere and serious in addressing the problem. They also commented on direction of struggle of popular sector in conservation of natural resources that needed courage and faith in religious teachings and righteousness in what they do. They also said the network of religions should be very strong.

Regarding the murder of Venerable Supot Suwajoe, abbot of Metta Dharm Monastic Residence and an activist of



the later photo of Venerable Supot Suwajoe, abbot of Metta Dharm Monastic Residence and activist of Sekiya Dharm before he was murdered.

Sekiya Dharm, in the compound of the monastic residence at Ban Huay Ngu Nai, Sansai Sub-District, Fang District, Chiangmai Province on June 17, 2005, it is believed that the murder is resulted from a problem of local influential capitalist who wanted to expand his tangerine plantation to conserved forest in the monastic residence compound and is a watershed and rich forest of over 1,500 rai.



1. Panellists have reflected on their respective faiths of 3 religions and morality regarding the violence.

(L-R) Mr.Niti Hasan, Mr.Sntisuk Soponsiri, Mr.Sulak Sivaraksa and Fr.Vichai Phoktawee.

2. Media and press interested in this seminar.



Situation in the South Road to Peace is still Uncertain?

By THANYALAK NAVALAKSANAKAVI

It has been almost 2 years that the problem in the South is still unresolved, but worsening further, since the government continues to address the problem with arms and violence. After the general election on February 6, 2005, people in the three southern border provinces have overwhelmingly voted for Democrats with as high as 73% so express their stand that they do not agree with violence and current policies of the government in addressing problems in the border provinces. They disagreed with the government's attempt in persistently telling them that the insurgents wanted to separate from Thailand, because they still love their homeland that they have lived for generations. They also give significance to rights and freedom in expressing their opinion through



Mr. Anand Panyarachun, the chairperson of Nation Reconciliation Commission.

democratic election. When the election result came out like this, Prime Minister Thaksin felt losing face and interpreted their intention as negative. He then imposed a concept of zoning of areas cooperating with the government by giving more budget, while areas that do not cooperate would not get any budget. Luckily that the majority of people in the



The incident of violence at Takbai police station, Naratiwat Province.

country disagreed with this idea while leading scholars in Thailand all voiced out their disagreement for fear that the situation would be worst and division would be created among people in the country. Facing this disagreement, Prime Minister Thaksin had to revise his plan and agreed to set up an independent National Reconciliation Commission on March 28, 2005 to address problems in border areas as per demand of scholars. He has asked Mr. Anand Panyarachun, former Prime Minister to chair this commission.

This National Reconciliation Commission is entrusted with a task of recommending policies, mechanism and method of promoting reconciliation in Thai society, especially border provinces in the South by promoting justice, reducing misunderstanding among groups with diverse cultures, eradicating conditions and preventing violence,

promoting unity in the nation, as well as conducting study and research on causes and scope of violence in the three border provinces of the South. The guidelines proposed by this reconciliation commission have brought about hope in people who want genuine peace. However, after starting the work on peace building for a short

while, it was challenged by rioters with their violent action almost everyday, such as killing innocent people, bombing Haadyai airport in Songkhla, and recently bombing in Yala Province on several spots on the same night of July 14, 2005. This unrest has moved Prime Minister Thaksin to lose his perseverance and introduce an executive decree on emergency to be imposed on the three border provinces in the South, replacing the martial law. This executive decree entrusts the Prime Minister with full power to resolve problems in the South. Certainly this



Muslims in the border South showed the campaign "To be reconciled and understanding is the power of success"



the committee of National Reconciliation Commission met people in the border South.

executive decree with dictatorial nature like this would be opposed by non-violence advocates, several senior scholars who are respected in Thai society, several NGOs and mass media who came out to express their disagreement to this executive decree.

Regarding concern and worry on this executive decree, the non-violence advocates believe that it would worsen the situation further. It is like declaring war in the three southern border provinces. Military troops are sent with full firearms and the Prime Minister is the direct commander. In particular, some articles (like article 11) authorise military personnel and police to arrest and detain suspects. One of the factors contributing to worsening violence and problems in the South is the arrest, abduction, torture and killing of suspects (from point of view of police) by the police. This includes the case of lawyer Somchai Neelapaijit who is missing and lawsuit could not be brought up against police who have committed this crime. These incidents have hurt families of the missing or abducted. They even push these people to go against the government and do not co-operate with government officials. Hence, this article would

worsen the situation further. This is also true for article giving power to limit freedom of press. In addition, article 17 on impunity indicates that public officials are not held responsible for their action in all cases (civil, criminal and disciplinary). Mr. Anand Panyarachun, the chairperson of Na-

tional Reconciliation Commission, even called this executive decree as “license to kill”. Not only that, this executive decree is not introduced only to cope with violence in the border South, it also entrusts power to deal with any demonstrators or public gathering.

The introduction of this executive decree by Prime Minister Thaksin is merely a complete refusal of reconciliation and peaceful option. It means he does not realise the importance of democracy because he limits rights and freedom of the people further. His move destroys politics of popular sector from participating in expression of opinion and solution. It also violates human rights,

because even the basic rights of the people, namely right to life, freedom and security in life, are granted by the state got its people. Problems in the three southern border provinces are rooted in the long history and need to be understood. We need to accept religious and racial difference and diversity of the people who have been living in this land for generations. When problems have occurred for a long time, solution cannot be done in 3 months time as intended by the Prime Minister. The work of the National Reconciliation Commission, which aims at healing the wounds of the people in the southern border provinces from what the state has done, like abduction, killing at Krue Se Mosque, and Tak Bai incident. Families of the lost ones from these incidents need to be heal. This takes time for healing chronic wounds and need ongoing care, although it takes months and even years. The important thing is that we need to understand those who are different from us, respect local cultural and traditional differences, do not use violence, and the state must reinforce solution of problems with peaceful means based on justice, sincerity and seriousness. Then, peace is possible.



Muslims in the border South pray for peace in their motherland.



Wat Yai Chaiyamongkol

Of Thousands of Words, Images and Impressions

After Seminar “From Gaudium et Spes to World Social Forum: the Church and the World” Chico and his wife together with CCJP Staffs on tour of Temples at Phra Nakhon Sri Ayuthaya.



Wat Chaiyawattanaram



Chico and his wife together with CCJP Staffs.



CLOSING IMAGE



Birds of Peace?

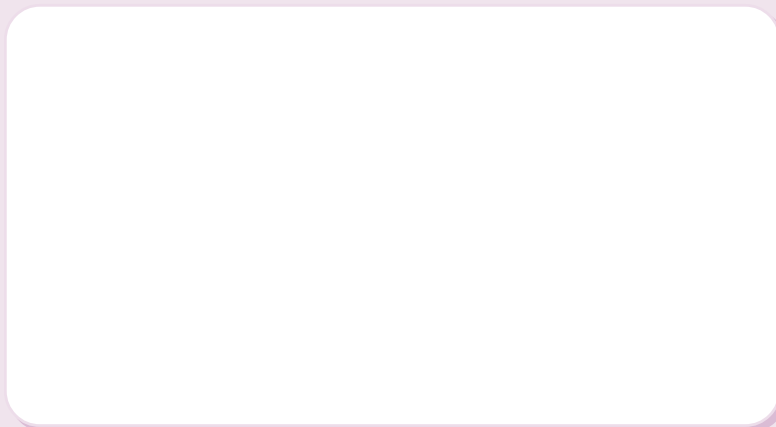


Daughter of the Earth



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