



# A U S T R A L I A - I N D I A F O C U S

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## WELCOME MESSAGE

Welcome to the first on-line edition of Australia-India Focus, which is a product of collaboration between the Australia India Business Council and the Australia-India Council. The transformation from printed newsletter to electronic format underlines the increasing sophistication of Australia-India relations and reflects our growing links in information technology and communications.

The new format will enable us to reach a much wider audience, helping us to broaden continually Australia's engagement with India. In this way, Australia-India Focus plays an important part in helping the Australia-India Council fulfil its core objectives. These include demonstrating to India Australia's excellence in all fields, including education, science and technology, health and sports and promoting knowledge in India and Australia of each other's society and culture.

Michael Abbott QC, Chairman, Australia-India Council

On behalf of the Australia India Business Council it gives me great pleasure to welcome readers to the first electronic edition of Australia-India Focus which is produced in partnership with the Australia-India Council. Since the last print issue of Australia-India Focus was published, relations between Australia and India have strengthened considerably across a wide range of political, cultural, social and business activities.

As the peak Australian council responsible for promoting all aspects of business collaboration between our two countries, the Australia India Business Council (AIBC) is delighted that trade and investment in both directions has been growing at a faster rate than ever before. The impetus for this has come from the leadership of our national and state governments, demonstrated by a number of official visits to India and significant support for accompanying business delegations.

The challenge is to ensure that our interest is sustained over the long term, a challenge that the AIBC is determined to meet. To this end, I appeal to all our readers who have current business links with India, or who are interested in developing such links, to join the AIBC and work with us to achieve our vision together. Our membership is open to large, medium and small businesses and individuals. You can participate at a national as well as a state/territory level. A number of events are planned across Australia to stimulate ideas, provide information, lobby with governments and encourage networking. Through our united efforts, we can make a real difference.

Neville Roach AO, Chairman, Australia India Business Council

## INDIAN ECONOMIC REFORMS CREATE SIGNIFICANT OPPORTUNITIES FOR AUSTRALIA

The Australian Trade Minister, Hon Mark Vaile MP, undertook successful talks with his Indian counterpart, Mr Arun Jaitley, Minister of Commerce and Industry in the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) meeting in New Delhi from 17-18 February 2003. The JMC is the peak forum for trade talks between Australia and India. During the visit, Mr Vaile also met with senior members of the Indian Cabinet including the Ministers for Finance, Agriculture, Petroleum & Natural Gas and Education.

Mr Vaile urged the Indian Government to continue to open its economy and explore ways of expanding its commercial relationship with Australia. He also raised a number of specific issues of concern to Australian exporters, including lowering India's tariffs on health and medical equipment, coal, wool, wine and other agricultural products.

Mr Vaile also led a business delegation comprising representatives from more than 35 Australian companies who participated in the 14<sup>th</sup> India-Australia Joint Business Council (JBC) meeting

between the Australia India Business Council and the India Australia Joint Business Council, the latter being part of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).

"India's ongoing reform process provides opportunities for Australian companies in sectors such as oil, gas and energy development, education, specialist health care services and agriculture," Mr Vaile said.

"I was particularly impressed with the range of opportunities available to the business sectors from both countries in each others' markets. There are natural complementarities that will see the Australian and Indian trade and investment relationship grow," Mr Vaile said.

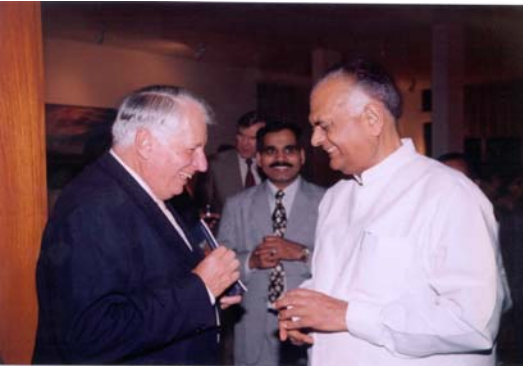
Given high interest expressed during his visit, Mr Vaile announced that he had asked Austrade to organise an Indian delegation to visit Australia to see first-hand our world class mining and energy capabilities, and that he looked forward to meeting with representatives of the Indian business sector during the next JMC / JBC in 2004.

## AUSTRALIA-INDIA FOCUS

### SIR GUS NOSSAL DELIVERS CRAWFORD LECTURE IN INDIA

Eminent Australian scientist Sir Gus Nossal, one of the world's leading immunologists, delivered the second Sir John Crawford Lecture to a high-level audience in New Delhi on 28 March 2003.

Sir John Crawford worked closely with Indian and international colleagues to pioneer the Green Revolution in India's agricultural development. In this spirit, the Crawford Lecture is a project to exchange knowledge and understanding between Australia and India on issues of major public interest. Given his long association with India, Professor Nossal was an inspired choice to engage in the project. On his week-long visit he interacted extensively with students, academics and researchers, including meeting biomedical scientists in New Delhi, Hyderabad and Mumbai to explore bilateral collaboration in this field.



In an oration entitled "*International Health Advances in a Troubled World: Challenges for International Cooperation*" Professor Nossal argued a compelling case to demonstrate how improved health in developing countries would contribute massively to economic development. He stated that a global investment of US\$31 billion a year would not only save eight million lives a year but could reap economic gains of US\$186 billion a year.

Hosted jointly by the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER) and the Australia-India Council (AIC), the Lecture is a sign of the increasing strength and sophistication of engagement between our two countries.

(Photo — Sir Gus Nossal meets Mr K C Pant, Deputy Chairman, Indian Planning Commission at a reception hosted by Australian High Commissioner H.E. Ms Penny Wensley AO)

### AUSTRALIAN AUTHORS TOUR INDIA

Renowned author Peter Carey and Kim Scott, a relatively new writer of indigenous background, have substantially raised the profile of Australian literature after visiting India from 5–13 February 2003. Part of the Australian Literature Touring Program, which was coordinated by Asialink and supported by the Australia-India Council and the Australia Council for the Arts, the tour helped in introducing 'new' authors to Indian publishers and academia stuck 'one generation back' in Australian writing.

As a result, Penguin India has undertaken to print copies of Kim Scott's award winning *Benang* and to import Peter Carey's books for sale in the market. To date *Benang* was Number 9 on the India Top Ten Fiction list.

### INDIAN TARIFF CUT GOOD NEWS FOR AUSTRALIAN WOOL EXPORTS

Australian wool exporters stand to benefit from India's decision in their 2003-04 Budget to cut the basic tariff on greasy wool used for clothing from 15 to 5 percent, Federal Trade Minister Hon Mark Vaile MP and Federal Agriculture Minister Hon Warren Truss MP said on 18 February 2003.

"This is a significant win for both Australian wool exporters, who will benefit from the lower tariff, and for India's textiles industry, which stands to increase its international competitiveness," Mr Vaile said. "The Government is very pleased India has listened to our concerns about its raw wool tariffs, which are the highest in the world. India is our fifth largest market for wool, with Australian exports to the subcontinent rising 7.5 per cent in 2002 to be valued at \$189 million." Mr Truss said.

India's Budget decision represents the culmination of several years of collective effort by the Government, industry and the Australia-India Joint Business Group on Natural Fibres and Textiles. The decision builds on earlier Australian Government efforts to reduce Indian wool tariffs, which resulted in cuts to the basic tariff rate on raw wool from 20 to 15 per cent (1999-2000 Budget), on wool tops from 35 to 20 per cent and on worsted yarn from 40 to 20 per cent (2000-01 Budget).

"This latest tariff reduction will help make Indian woollen goods more competitive in the Indian domestic and international markets and demonstrates India is serious about opening its economy and expanding its commercial relationship with Australia," Mr Vaile said.

The Chairman of Australian Wool Innovation, Ian McLachlan, has welcomed India's move as providing a positive stimulus for our wool exports and congratulated the Government for negotiating another bilateral trade win.

**SUCCESSFUL JOINT BUSINESS COUNCIL MEETING IN NEW DELHI**

The 14<sup>th</sup> meeting of the India - Australia Joint Business Council (JBC) was held on 18 February 2003 in New Delhi. Keynote addresses were made by Hon Mark Vaile MP, Minister of Trade for Australia and Mr Arun Jaitley, Hon Minister for Law and Commerce & Industry, Government of India. Joint Chairs of the JBC were Mr Neville Roach, Chairman, Australia India Business Council and Mr Vikram Kapur, Chairman, India – Australia Joint Business Council, a subset of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI).



The JBC was attended by a cross section of Indian and Australian companies with interests in developing stronger commercial linkages. The Australia delegation to the JBC consisted of over 53 attendees from 35 different companies, with both SMEs and large scale organisations represented. Concurrent industry sector sessions enabled delegates to discuss matters of mutual interest within their industry sector and to make recommendations to advance India- Australia cooperation, particularly in education, information technology, infrastructure and tourism sector.

“All the Australian and Indian participants demonstrated that they were serious about strengthening business relations between our two countries. The climate for making significant progress has never been better, with the Governments as well as businesses of both nations positive and committed to significantly closer and greater collaboration. The challenge going forward is to build on the momentum generated by the visit and the meetings.” Mr Roach said.

*(Photo L to R: H.E. Ms Penny Wensley AO, Australian High Commissioner to India, Hon Mr Mark Vaile, Minister of Trade, Australia, Mr Arun Jaitley, Hon Minister for Law and Commerce & Industry, Government of India, Mr Deepak Chatterjee, Secretary, Ministry of Commerce & Industry).*

Factors contributing to the success of the JBC included: the strength and quality of the business delegation accompanying the Minister and participating in the JBC; the leadership of Minister Vaile and his genuine goodwill towards India and the Australia-India relationship; the rapport that developed between the two Ministers during the JMC; the strong support of the Australian High Commission, Austrade and Australian Education International (AEI) in India; the strong support of the Indian High Commissioner in Australia and the Consul-General for India in Sydney; the support, arrangements, facilities and generous hospitality of the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; the generous hospitality of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), India’s other peak business council; and the many special one-on-one and group meetings between Australian delegates and Indian counterparts focusing on sectoral and other specific interests arranged by Austrade, AEI and FICCI.

Both sides agreed that Australian and Indian businesses should look at new goods and services for trade. Indian companies should look to Australia as a regional headquarters for Asia-Pacific operations. There was considerable exchange of views on Information and Communications Technology with both sides seeing opportunities to leverage off each other’s skills and knowledge. The balance of trade is in Australia’s favour and this trend is likely to continue. The Indian side stressed the need for Australian investment in India to develop projects for exporting to third countries thus helping redress the trade imbalance.

Products with considerable scope for increased trade between the two countries were identified as:

*Indian Exports to Australia* - textiles and clothing, software, gems and jewellery, processed foods, tourism, drugs and pharmaceuticals, chemicals;

*Australian Exports to India* - automotive components and services, software, mining equipment, mining technology and skills transfer, food processing equipment, LNG as an energy source, infrastructure, tourism, health services, education including vocational training, agricultural based technologies for pest control.

The JBC considered some specific sectoral issues and made observations and recommendations regarding information technology, education, food processing, tariffs, airline and sea links, agricultural products, pharmaceuticals, wool, and visa issues.

*The full Joint Communique is available from the Australia India Business Council’s website at [www.aibc.org.au/news.htm](http://www.aibc.org.au/news.htm)*

**INDIAN SCHOLARS AWARDED INAUGURAL AUSTRALIAN STUDIES FELLOWSHIPS**

The Australia-India Council (AIC) announced the awarding of Australian Studies Fellowships to five Indian scholars on 1 May 2003. The fellowships will be administered by Curtin University and La Trobe University for a consortium of Australian universities which include Curtin, La Trobe, Monash and Queensland. The fellowships are an extension of the AIC's Australian Studies Program.

It is hoped up to six of these prestigious fellowships will be awarded annually in areas such as Australian literature, politics and history, environment and health, tourism, film, media communication and the performing arts, gender issues, multiculturalism and indigenous issues. The fellowships are aimed at both established Indian academics as well as post-graduate students from Indian tertiary institutions with a strong interest in Australian studies.

"The research carried out by the awardees will help deepen India's understanding of Australia's vibrant and diverse society. The high quality of the projects augurs well for this important and innovative program," said Michael Abbott QC, Chairman of the AIC.

Mr Abbott congratulated the award winners, noting that the inaugural fellowships had an appropriate focus on the first Australians as well as Australian literature, history, the performing arts, politics, agriculture and the environment.

Welcoming the awards, the Australian High Commissioner to India, H.E. Ms Penny Wensley AO, said that strengthening educational links between Australia and India, including links between academics and institutions, was a high priority for the Australian Government in India. Awareness of the quality and diversity of Australian education was growing and

Australia had become the third most popular destination for Indian students seeking education overseas. The fellowships would add a significant new dimension to the education and research relationship between the two countries.

The Senior Fellowship awardees are: Dr. Tej Pal Singh, Director of Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI) School of Advanced Studies; Dr. Priti Singh, Faculty of Political Science, Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), and Dr Pankaj K. Singh, Chairperson of the Department of English, Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.

The Junior Fellowship awardees are: Ms Naga Radhika Kavoori, Department of English, University of Madras and Ms Susan Thomas of the Centre of Linguistics and English, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

**BRIEFING ON INDIAN BUDGET**

Mr Mohan Monteiro, Senior Manager, Corporate and International Tax, Ernst & Young, Sydney provided a *Report on the Indian Budget* to Australia India Business Council members and guests in Sydney in late March 2003.

Key points from Mr. Monteiro's presentation were:

- The Indian Government strongly recognises the need for rapid development in infrastructure, and has laid down initiatives it proposes to take to address this need;

- The important role which the services sector is playing in the Indian economy has been highlighted;
- A healthy level of foreign exchange reserves of US\$73 billion is seen as paving the way for further relaxations in Indian exchange control regulations;
- Various other policy initiatives were announced which seek to promote foreign investments into India.
- Tax-wise, a key announcement was the

introduction of a VAT regime to replace the existing sales tax structure. Also, an increase in the service tax rate for 5% to 8% and the widening of the service tax ambit is expected to garner significant revenues.

- The trend of reduction in custom duty rates has continued and the Government has reaffirmed India's commitment to reduce tariff barriers and to more fully integrate the Indian economy with global markets.

**RESURGENCE - STORIES OF AN EARTHQUAKE, SURVIVAL AND ART**

The ancient communities and traditions of Gujarat have produced a world-wide reputation for fine textiles. On India's Republic Day, 26 January 2001, an earthquake tore through the desert region. Kutch, the largest district in the state, bore the brunt of its force. Artisans lost their loved ones, homes, and their livelihoods. Assisting in the re-establishment of the textile industry, hundreds of Australians and Indians have contributed to various projects over the past two years.



The result is "Resurgence", a showcase of the unique talents of Kutch artisans. Creating narrative works using traditional techniques the artisans embroider, print, weave, tie and dye brilliantly coloured and intricately patterned fabrics- the works depict stories of survival and dreams for the future.

Held at the Manly Art Gallery and Museum from 28 March - 4 May 2003, the Australia-India Council is proud to have co-sponsored the exhibition of this culturally rich exchange between Australia and India.

*(Photo: The creators of Unity in Sangathan, KMVS HQ, Bhuj. Photo C. Douglas 2002.*

*KMVS, established in 1989, is an organisation of rural women from the arid border villages of Kutch District working for their socioeconomic development and empowerment. KMVS has 8000 members of which 1500 are traditional craftswomen, organised and operating as producer groups. Working as a collective (Sangathan), KMVS focuses on issues of health, education, environment, savings and credit, and livelihood. The members take pride in their traditional craft and look at it not just as means of livelihood, but as an expression of their art.)*

**NEW PROSPECTS FOR AUSTRALIA'S TRADE WITH INDIA CONTINUE TO EMERGE**

India's ongoing domestic reforms provide opportunities for Australian companies in sectors as diverse as energy development, education, specialist health care and environmental services, film production and agribusiness products.

Australian businesses are already doing well in the Indian market. Merchandise exports to India totaled nearly \$2.5 billion in 2002 and have doubled since 1996. Growth has been underpinned by rising demand for Australian coal, minerals, non-monetary gold, wool and fresh vegetables.

The recent Indian budget reduces tariffs on all greasy wool used for apparel from 15 per cent to 5 per cent. This positive outcome for Australian exporters (India is Australia's fifth-largest market for wool) follows a recent visit to India by the Trade Minister, Mr Vaile, who pressed Australia's case directly with the Indian Government. It represents the culmination of several years of effort by the Minister, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's textiles and clothing market access team and the Australian industry.

To give impetus to Australia's exports to India, the Australian Government is seeking further reductions in tariffs on wool, coal, wheat, apples, macadamia nuts, wine, and specialised drying oils.

*(See 'Trade 2003' - Australia's trade policy framework and review of Australia's trade outcomes during 2002 - <http://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/trade2003/>)*

## SENIOR INDIAN JOURNALISTS VISIT AUSTRALIA

Three senior journalists from leading Indian media visited Australia in late April under the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's International Media Visits Program. Ms Rasheeda Bhagat, Deputy Editor of the Hindu Business Line newspaper, Mr K S Sachidananda Murthy, Resident Editor of the Malayala Manorama Group in Delhi, and Mr Alok Mehta, Editor of Outlook Saptahik undertook a series of meetings in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne with Australian Government officials, business people, and university students and academics.

According to Diana Nelson, Manager of the International Media Visits program, "the visit aimed to underline and promote the growing partnership between Australia and India based on strong bilateral linkages (not just a shared colonial heritage and love of cricket) and to further raise Australia's profile in the Indian media".

The journalists met with Senator Richard Alston, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, and discussed growing educational linkages with the Federal Minister for Education, Brendan Nelson. The Assistant Treasurer, Helen Coonan, and the Chief Economist of HSBC, John Edwards, briefed the group on Australia's strong economic performance over the past decade. Defence is also an area of growing bilateral cooperation and the group met Indian officers currently studying at the Australian Defence College in Canberra.



Further meetings with Cine Oz, NSW Film and Television Office, and a tour of Fox Studios highlighted the extent of the growing cooperation in the film-making area.

The group was also interested in exploring people-to-people links and met with Members of the Australia-India Council, several prominent Australian-Indians in media, business and film, and groups of Indian students currently undertaking studies in Australia.

*(Photo L to R – Mr Alok Mehta of Outlook Sapthahik, Mr Neville Roach AO, Chairman of Australia India Business Council, Mr Philip Green, NSW State Director, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ms Rasheeda Bhagat of Hindu Business Line, Mr K S Sachidananda Murthy of Malayala Manorama Group, Mr M. Ganapathi, Indian Consul General, Sydney, and Mr James Dalton, Executive Officer – India Section, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade).*

## SEMINAR ON QUEENSLAND'S EXPORT SUCCESS IN INDIA

Over 60 business and government delegates attended a Business Breakfast Seminar organised by the Department of State Development and the Australia India Business Council in Brisbane on 2 April 2003. Attendees heard from a distinguished panel of speakers on Queensland (and Australia's) export success in India to date, as well as future opportunities.

The Hon Mike Ahern, Qld Representative for Africa, Middle East and India spoke on the positive outcome of the recent first official visit to India by the Queensland Premier, Mr Peter Beattie. Premier Beattie was the first serving Queensland Premier to visit Queensland and his visit attracted significant attention in the Indian media. Representatives from thirteen Queensland organisations accompanied the Premier on this visit. Other speakers at the Seminar included Mr M. Ganapathi, Consul General of India, Sydney, Mr Neville Roach AO, Chairman, Australia India Business Council, Mr Sunil Lal, Partner (South Asia), Hunt & Hunt Lawyers and Vice Chairman, NSW for Australia India Business Council, and Mr Shamim Ishaq, Director, Indian Minerals Corporation.

India is an important market for Queensland and is the fourth largest export market for Queensland products. Queensland's exports represent around ½ of Australia's total exports to India. Whilst Queensland's major exports include coal and agricultural products, there is an increasing trend in the export of goods and services for the mining, tourism, leisure, healthcare and environment management sectors. Queensland firms are also achieving success in securing post-production work for Indian films, as well as becoming a popular location for Indian filming. During Premier Beattie's visit to India, an MOU on economic cooperation was signed between Queensland and Karnataka, encouraging cooperation across a number of industry sectors including education, mining, food, agriculture, transport infrastructure, tourism infrastructure, and IT. The MOU can be found on the Department of State Development's website - [www.sd.qld.gov.au](http://www.sd.qld.gov.au) For further information on the Queensland Government's initiatives for India (as well as activities of the Australia India Business Council in Queensland), please contact Gayle O'Brien at [gayle.obrien@sd.qld.gov.au](mailto:gayle.obrien@sd.qld.gov.au)

## NSW GOVERNMENT EMPHASISING TRADE WITH INDIA

Since August 2002 the NSW Government has launched a series of trade initiatives to promote jobs and investment with India. The previous NSW-East Asia Business Advisory Council has been renamed the NSW-Asia Business Advisory Council, and the NSW Department of State and Regional Development has facilitated seminars, business networking functions and trade delegations in certain business sectors.

A major trade mission to India in December 2002 was led by Mr Loftus Harris, Director General of Department State and Regional Development, and Mr Neville Roach, Chairman of the Australia India Business Council, Chairman of Fujitsu Australia, and member of the renamed NSW-Asia Business Advisory Council.

"These initiatives aim to provide business with an in-depth understanding of the Indian economy and trade and investment opportunities for NSW firms," the Premier of NSW, Mr Bob Carr said. Building on the above initiatives, Mr Carr has also announced that the NSW Department of State and Regional Development will lead another trade mission to India in early December 2003 (date to be confirmed). Joining Mr Carr in welcoming this announcement was the Chair of the NSW-Asia Business Advisory Council, Mr Henry Tsang MLC.

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA FACILITATING AGRICULTURAL TRADE DELEGATIONS

A delegation of 28 apple importers, dairy farmers, industry representatives and stock feed suppliers from India visited Western Australia in February/March 2003 as part of ongoing project of training by the Western Australian Department of Agriculture. Dairy industry representatives from Maharashtra and Gujarat undertook an intensive 2 week training program at Harvey, WA. Feedstock delegates met with WA suppliers and talks are underway for importation of feedstock ingredients for the dairy industry from WA to India. A group of Indian apple importers from Mumbai, Hyderabad and Chennai visited as part of an annual program which has seen substantial increase in the resultant level of fruit exports.

## INFORMATION ON AIC, AIBC AND AUSTRALIA-INDIA FOCUS



The Australia-India Council (AIC) was established in 1992 in response to a recommendation by the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, following an inquiry into Australia's relations with India.

The Council initiates or supports a range of activities designed to promote a greater awareness of Australia in India and a greater awareness of India in Australia, including visits and exchanges between the two countries, development of institutional links, and support of studies in each country of the other. The Council offers support, in the form of funding, for projects likely to contribute to the development of the relationship, within the context of AIC objectives and guidelines.

For more information, visit [www.dfat.gov.au/aic](http://www.dfat.gov.au/aic)

Or contact: The Executive Director, AIC  
PO Box E8 Kingston ACT 2604  
Telephone +61 2 6261 3839  
Facsimile +61 2 6261 1304  
E-mail: [ausindia.council@dfat.gov.au](mailto:ausindia.council@dfat.gov.au)



The AIBC is a national NGO and is recognised by the Australian government as the peak body for promoting business links between Australia and India. The AIBC first point of contact by government and business representatives from both countries seeking access to industry, business and government leaders of both countries.

The AIBC maintains close relationships with strategic government agencies, the diplomatic corps and industry bodies, and also has an affiliated counterpart in India, the India Australia Joint Business Council.

The AIBC has representatives and members across all states and territories in Australia, and has three different membership categories available.

For more information, visit [www.aibc.org.au](http://www.aibc.org.au)

Or contact: The Executive Director, AIBC  
GPO Box 3271, Sydney NSW 2001.

Telephone : +61 2 8234 7410  
Facsimile: +61 2 8234 7499  
E-mail: [info@aibc.org.au](mailto:info@aibc.org.au)

## Australia-India Focus

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