



Malaysian Blogosphere Goes Into Fever Frenzy Over NSTP Suit

Posted on 19 January 2007 by Guest Blogger

There is a [phrase](#) from the Roman satiric poet [Juvenal](#): Cacoethes scribendi; which means “an insatiable urge to write”. Although the pen maybe mightier than the sword but sometimes those words that flow out from the pen can lead you into trouble.

The New Straits Times Press (M) Berhad, its deputy chairman, chief executive officer, group editor-in-chief and Brendan Pereira [filed a suit in the High Court](#) here against bloggers Jeff Ooi of [Screenshots](#) and Ahirudin Attan of [Rocky's Bru](#) for defamation and malicious falsehood.

The Malaysian blogosphere was already feverish with hints being dropped as early as the 13th January where a popular blogsite called [Kickdefella](#) launched the No Fear/Bloggers United download button.

Finally, all was revealed during the wee hours on Thursday 18th January on Rocky's Bru where Ahiruddin Attan announced that he was served the papers at 9.30 PM at the Press Club. It was literally a [stack of papers](#) looking almost a foot high.

The blogosphere turned their fever into frenzy and within 24 hours Screenshots, Rocky's Bru and Kickdefella received hundreds of comments of support.

Many of these comments were lambasting the NSTP for impeding the free speech of bloggers. [Elizabeth Wong](#) is a Member of Secretariat, Suaram and former Secretary-General of the National Human Rights Society. When approached for comment, she explained:

“Most people don't understand the intended object of libel suits, which, in the domain of the rich, the powerful or the politically-connected, acts as a secondary line of defense and generally have more to do with concealment of facts than defamation.

“Human rights groups are naturally very concerned as there will be overarching and long-term effects on freedom of expression and a citizen's fundamental right to be informed.”

She also adds that, “In our political climate where censorship and self-censorship have become common practice, the internet, and by default, blogs, have become the last bastion for free expression. If this sliver of space ceases to exist, there will be no available avenues left to express oneself, and the only option remaining could well be a lot more explosive, radical and perhaps even counter-productive in the long-run.”

But what does freedom of expression really mean? In my new renewed vigour to learn up our legal system I turned to Edmund Bon, a human rights lawyer and a member of the Human Rights Committee for the Bar Council.

He quotes Article 19(3) (a) of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#):

Article 19

1. Everyone shall have the right to hold opinions without interference.

2. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of his choice.

3. The exercise of the rights provided for in paragraph 2 of this article carries with it special duties and responsibilities. It may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:

(a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others;

(b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

And he also quoted the [European Convention on Human Rights](#), Article 10(2):

ARTICLE 10

1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. this right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.

2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or the rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.

“Basically, if a person or an organisation feel that their rights and reputation have been abused by others whom have abused their freedom of speech, the law actually gives opportunity for recourse.”

“Bloggers must also realise that they do not operate in a legal vacuum and while they are free to express their freedom of speech they cannot with this freedom impede the rights of others!” he added.

Whether the Malaysian blogosphere will be willing to listen to legal arguments or will they prefer to trust the doom-gloom scenarios provided by the NGOs and Opposition Parties, their views are already showing in the comments of these blogs facing the legal suit.

Opinion shaping aside, Edmund commented that the other landmark outcome from these trial will be how blogging will be defined within the Malaysian cyberspace and whether the so called ‘last bastion for free expression’ will cease to exist.

[Sharizal Shaarani](#)

has been a blogger since 2002. Not a seasoned blogger but a seasonal blogger, as Jeff Ooi remarked recently, he enjoys writing tremendously and will defend his right to freedom of expression. He will also defend his right to sue anyone for libel if they call him a blind baldy.

Technorati Tags: [sharizal shaarani](#)

Posted in: [Issues](#)

Author's web site: <http://www.monsterblog.com.my>

Comments (36) -> “Malaysian Blogosphere Goes Into Fever Frenzy Over NSTP Suit”

1. Paul Warren

[19 January 2007 19:58](#)

1

Why call yourself Monsterblog when you are NST? You could have fooled me. So I am no different from you with my very anonymous name up there.

AS NST you have no shame when you fail to report news that is relevant to your readers. You assume, and by doing so making an ass of u and me, that what you do not report did not happen. You shamelessly paraded yourself during the Anwar Affair. You have so far failed to mention the Bowman Report and the former Chief judges New Zealand vacation which according to your archives did not happen.

And now you decide for the rest of us that you did not plagiarise. And just because you say so you assume that yours is the final word on the subject. Who ever ordained you with the final word, may I ask?

NST you are shameless and now you have comfortably sat yourself in the middle of a cesspool of **** and decaying and decomposing bodies of others just like you...Goebels for instance

Now let me see if you have what it takes to publish this posting or to be the monekey that you really are and just not publish this.

Suanie: Erm... Mr. Paul Warren... did you actually read the post above the comments? Because... never mind 😊

2. Charanjit Singh

[19 January 2007 19:59](#)

2

Thanks Sharizal Shaarani for posting this news piece on Monster blog. As u all know Monster blog is own by NSTP.

My take on it is this. Jeff Ooi and the other blogger just highlight an accusation by a foreign media that accuse the former Editor of News Straits Times , Mr Brendan Pereira of plagiarism. so is the effort by Jeff Ooi and Rocky bru to highlight this news among to defaming the reputation of an editor of a leading newspaper or is it freedom of speech as guaranteed by the Internation Convrtion of Human Rights.

3. sewel

[19 January 2007 20:39](#)

3

Kallimullah and his NST sidekicks got no choice dude because nst owned by sharikat UMNO sendirian berhad. Sendirian berhad means tolong member sendiri aje. So when other bloggers try to cari pasal with the established status quo then naturally there is confrontation. So NST sue la. Actually they are asking the bloggers :”LU SIAPA”? nst think that media is only their punyak bapak punya and nobody else can express views la. Tu la its all about ‘cari pasal’ and why not.Bloggers hidup!

4. [Mydeen Aboo Backer](#)[19 January 2007 22:09](#)

4

Oooi, Sharizal Sharaani, we at SiPM have taken a resolution that you’re hereby declared a blind baldy. Such blatant pliaragism needs to be punished. We will sue !

Btw, bloody good post, mate.

5. [Peter Tan](#)[19 January 2007 22:51](#)

5

Blind baldy... hmm...

6. [Paul Warren](#)
[20 January 2007 12:00](#)
6

Suanie

Of course I read your post. But I should add, this is the first time I also am visiting your blog. And since I can for the first time lay down my own comments, subject to your moderation, of course, I thought I would be cheeky, and set out my ground rules for reading any opinion or report you might make on behalf of your masters. Those little bits I posted above is the viewing glass through which I read and view any of your reports and opinions. And, just like you, I too feel that it is my duty to remind your readers that anything you report or opionate has to be viewed through a looking galss of the readers own making. And I see my duty as one that requires of me to sell my looking glass. If only one more reader will look through the same viewing glass, he or she will see how cleverly you have left out perspectives to your story that will tell quite a different tale. And yours like mine is just but a biased take set to serve our own masters. Just that I don't have a master! You do! So to think for one minute that you have the same liberties that I do, you only have used that little clever characteristic that you possess to fool yourself.

In making that comment I hope I am not libelling myself as all that I am making is just an opinion and obviously as much as I might believe it to be fact, it cannot but remain within the boundaries of opinion. But then again you have invited me to comment here...and so I do.

As to your earlier brush off....well that is typically what anyone stuck in a corner do. Dismissing and taking the high road.

Suanie: Just checking 😊

Since you are new here, no we don't serve any masters. We are not paid for this gig. NSTP provides news resources and sometimes help publicise this blog. I didn't write the post above. Of course everyone has their own perspective; otherwise we all might just as well 'delete' the Internet

7. [ShaolinTiger](#)
[20 January 2007 15:08](#)
7

Paul Warren:

It is libelous actually as the assumptions you are making are completely untrue without any facts backing them or nor research/evidence.

8. [Muhammad Najib](#)
[20 January 2007 16:07](#)
8

Dear Sir,

I fully support NSTP in its lawsuit against Jeff Ooi (real name: Ooi Chuan Aun) and Ahiruddin Attan.

I am against Jeff Ooi for personal reasons and so I feel very happy NSTP is going to bankrupt him using the courts.

Jeff Ooi, a professional journalist who operates the online newspaper, Screenshots publishes mostly libelous, seditious and defaming content intentionally. Jeff Ooi does this with the intent to spread hurtful lies about innocent people so as to harm their character and reputation.

A good example is Jeff Ooi published hurtful lies about Brenden Pereira and also picked on Kalimullah Hassan. Jeff Ooi has a long standing personal grudge against Brenden and Kalimullah otherwise he would never deliberate defame them by publishing lies about both these great personalities.

9. [TheMalayMale](#)
[20 January 2007 21:05](#)
9

Sharizal - the blind baldy.

10. [william hitch](#)
[21 January 2007 09:05](#)
10

Muhammad Najib, are you stupid or something worst, did u reflect what you have jus wrote? Man, sit down alone and really think about it. Very sad indeed my friend.

11. [Joe](#)
[21 January 2007 13:22](#)
11

Freedom of expression, eh? Most people don't even know what to do with freedom to begin with.

The part that amuses me most is how the people one disagrees with are typically idiots, and those whom one agrees with turn out to be highly intellectually messiahs. Regardless.

12. [ShadowFox](#)
[21 January 2007 14:27](#)
12

Actually, jeff ooi is getting a taste of his own medicine since the photomalaysia.com incident.

He was very personal against the moderator of the forum.

Now he gets to feel how it is to be at the receiving end.

To me, I couldn't care about this Ghost fight Ghost incident, as one is a govt mouthpiece I don't care for, and another a hypocrite that claims to fight for the people but nothing really more than a gerakan honcho with personal agenda.

Seems to me, the blogosphere is bitching over a non-issue.

Free speech is still there, it's up to you to play the game right, anonymously if needed. 😊

13. [soporific](#)
[21 January 2007 16:27](#)
13

i'd just like to point out that we dont know how sure if this is mostly about the plagiarism thing when 48 diff posts were cited as defamatory.

also, bbc only posted up their story after jeff ooi 'broke' the news, isnt it? cause, if you know jon kent, he damn near never breaks anything except for wind.

oh, crap, that would be defamatory wouldnt it?

14. [Tom](#)
[21 January 2007 17:36](#)
14

Yesterday, the STAR reported:

PM: We are not borrowing foreign money to finance 9MP....A blog ran an article "Malaysia was borrowing US\$50bil without borrowing".

Is the Govt going to spent taxpayers monies to defend this serious claims? If not, does it mean the said blog contained the truth?

So, to sue or not to sue, does it mean the claims are true or not true? The truth is we will never know the truth, thats the truth, truthfully.

15. abuthen

[22 January 2007 09:36](#)

15

sharizal shaarani is a blind blady. And so is (was?) Peter Tan. I said so! So sue me!

16. abuthen

[22 January 2007 10:14](#)

16

suanie:

NST owns (or co-owns) this blog, No? That makes NST master of its bloggers (albeit unpaid) no? Hang on, uhhh.. what's the other term/name for such a relationship?

Paul Warren:

The art of self-delusion.

Suanie: So if you listen to The Eagles, you are a satan worshipper? Ahh the mentality 😊

17. [Logan](#)

[22 January 2007 11:16](#)

17

The issue is not whether NSTP can sue anyone (anyone can sue anyone, unless they have some form of diplomatic or constitutional immunity, the courts decide if the case is valid). The issue is if they SHOULD.

As a paper that has courted bloggers and has seemed (to me at least) to print news more relevant to progressive change in Malaysian governance, this move baffled and saddened me.

If anything, it will perpetuate the cycle of fear that surrounds the notion of public criticism. It will discourage people from voicing out their frustrations. It will give credence to the phobia that freedom of speech is a myth that no one, not even the fourth estate, is willing to stand up for.

Upset at RockyBru and Screenshots? Take them on as individuals. Discredit their claims on this website, their website, in your Newspaper. Address the issue of irresponsible speech, by responsible speech. Not try throw them in jail because they made you upset.

I'm not spending my money on Malaysian newspapers anymore, as non of them or the people who work with or for them seem to care.

18. abuthen

[22 January 2007 11:18](#)

18

Uhhh.. eagles and satan worshippers? Duh! the mentality indeed!

ok lah, giving you benefit of the doubt, I'll concede the minor possibility of your self-delusion resulting from confusion of your sense of self.

Suanie: lol thanks but I do know rather well what I am on about. Hence, I'm stopping here, there just isn't any point to it 😊

19. Jango Ang
[22 January 2007 15:05](#)
 19

Jeff Ooi has the right to defame anyone. NST has the right to seek redress in court. So to all sycophants of Jeff, my message is clear - you bloody morons, idiots, go to hell.

20. [Mat Merah](#)
[22 January 2007 15:57](#)
 20

Logan,

What gives you the idea that these bloggers are under threat of being thrown to jail?

As to whether NSTP should sue them, should they consider the court of public opinion before they decide to take any legal action?

After all, in any dispute, isn't the courts of law the best avenue to decide?

I don't think this lawsuit has stopped anyone from either criticising it or even criticising the government for that matter.

In fact, there is a section of people who are criticising NSTP as if it is the government.

So I reckon, instead of a chilling effect that Opposition Leader Lim Kit Siang alluded to, people are being emboldened to blog, write, campaign about this matter - no matter which part of the divide they are on.

As to what the fourth estate will stand up for, am sure they will stand up when they have to stand up.

It is indeed your right to stop buying the newspaper as it is their right to publish what they deem fit.

I would just argue that we have absolute freedom of speech by doing away with licences for newspapers in Malaysia.

Then let everyone compete for attention and influence in the marketplace of public opinion and ideas.

21. Strada Lunii
[22 January 2007 16:51](#)
 21

why 'delete' the internet when blogging is the problem? i think we all can live without blogs... by the way, suanie... the fact that you are commenting directly in the posts showed that.... ahh.. never mind.

Suanie: Why is blogging the problem? Before there were blogs, there were websites, forums and before that, Usenet.

The problem, from my point of view is not the medium, is the messenger.

I commented directly in the posts because I was answering the sole commentor. So you think I should stop then and let what I think are wild accusations fly? Opps I did it again 😊

Ya okay, I keep quiet from here on 😊

22. [Jibone](#)
[22 January 2007 17:33](#)
 22

Wow Jeff Ooi of screenshots and the geng is really enjoying this! Look at all the attentions he is getting! How many blogs are linking to his blog right now. Wow the traffic must be great.

I wish my blog got sued too 😞
 but I'm just not that shallow enough to right anything even remotely defame anyone.

23. [DekMat](#)
[22 January 2007 18:47](#)
 23

Logan (comment no 20): "Upset at RockyBru and Screenshots? Take them on as individuals. Discredit their claims on this website, their website, in your Newspaper. Address the issue of irresponsible speech, by responsible speech. Not try throw them in jail because they made you upset."

Address the issue of irresponsible by responsible speech is a great idea however, it is still their perogative and their right to press for defamation charges as it is well within their rights.

I don't agree that they're trying to throw bloggers into jail as we cannot speculate what kind of retribution they are seeking for; maybe an apology and injunction on past and future posts, maybe money i dont know so let's not speculate

And as this supposedly culture of fear thats been perpetuate i think it's silly. we as bloggers should know whether what we write will make someone fella pissed off so if we do know, we gotta defend it!

24. [Mat Merah](#)
[22 January 2007 19:10](#)
 24

Logan

What makes you think that the bloggers being sued will end up in jail?

Your suggestions on what NSTP should do, instead of initiating a lawsuit, is for a court of public opinion - not law.

Why do people feel that resorting to a court of law - recognisable by all - is not a good option?

Won't the verdict - whichever way it goes - provide a standard for those who blog?

Or should blogging be out of reach of any laws whatsoever - the Wild Wild West where bullets fly at High Noon and the best gunslinger wins?

How will it clamp down on free speech? Or cow people into shutting up? You have spoken as countless others on this issue.

Freedom cuts both ways. And the courts of law would be a good arbiter of any freedom.

25. [hawaiiichee](#)
[22 January 2007 21:56](#)
 25

Please post the following recommendations from me and an excerpt from Marina Mahathir.

What is freedom of speech?

Article 19 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948 says this:

Everyone has the right to opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

And Malaysia has signed this declaration.

What is our next step.

1. Tell everyone not to buy NST.
2. We must ensure that NST sales drop drastically so NST knows that it should not mess with the bloggers in Malaysia. Blogging should be a freedom that everyone enjoys.
3. Forward this email to as many people as possible and ask them not to buy NST to show protest that NST should not sue responsible bloggers who criticize the government responsibly.

<http://rantingsbymm.blogspot.com/2007/01/bloggers-fight-back.html>

Bloggers Fight Back!

Ok, let's put this conversation up front and centre, shall we? Our blogbros Jeff (<http://www.jeffooi.com>) and Rocky (<http://www.rockybru.blogspot.com/>) are being sued, as you all know. We may not all agree with everything they say but that is not the point. The point is, this sort of heavyhanded intimidation is an impediment to democracy because it impedes freedom of speech and limits our people's access to alternative views about current events. It insults all of us because it assumes that we cannot come up with the 'right' opinion if we are allowed to see all the different perspectives on a particular subject. It is a blatant form of censorship.

So, this is what we need to do:

First, stay united on this issue, which is the right of bloggers to express their opinions in cyberspace. Responsible bloggers do not write mere gossip or lies, so must be free to write what they want.

Secondly, support all efforts to support Rocky and Jeff. The first is the proposal to set up a fund to defend them, as well as other bloggers which may face the same problems in the future. This is in the works, and I have been asked to be a Trustee. Am just waiting for proper terms of reference to be drafted because if we are handling people's money, we need to have safeguards to ensure transparency and accountability.

Thirdly, I think we should start a guerrilla campaign on this. I think we should turn Kickdefella's great logo into a whole series of merchandise - t-shirts, stickers, posters, whatever - to be sold to raise funds for the defence fund. If we have the logo EVERYWHERE, what are they going to do? They can't rip off the stickers from cars, or t-shirts off people's backs. The guys who do those great stencil graffitis should be asked to also help.

Fourthly, boycott the NST and related publications. Yes, stop subs. Nothing will create greater fear among those guys than if their income drops.

Any other creative suggestions to show support will be greatly welcomed.

Bloggers, and anyone else who believes in freedom of speech, unite!

Posted by MarinaM at 6:49 PM

26. DekMat

[22 January 2007 22:01](#)

26

Logan, Right now it's hard for us to comment our opinions in Kickdefella. They have banned us from using our url and categorised it as spam. As such we are unable put in our website (so that readers can click on our names and forwarded to our website). Worse still the spam engine expands to ALL wordpress blogs including this one (hence why no forwards to my website when u click on my name)

Jeff Ooi? Hmmph he hasn't approved a comment of mine in weeks!

So much for equal rights.

These bloggers are like the pots calling the kettle black.

And about the fear of blogging because of this case; its a conjecture, but i tell you what, at SiPM we have been critical of the govt before the suit and we will be as critical after the suit too. I ensure u that!

Dek Mat

sipm.blogspot.com

27. Mydeen Aboo Backer

[23 January 2007 08:52](#)

27

Mydeen thinks that too many people are missing the forest for the trees. As Mydeen has stated on our blog, this is about the collision of two inalienable rights; the right to free speech and the right to seek legal redress.

The freedom fighters are missing this, and have now become the monster they are fighting by banning SiPM from not only their blog but all of wordpress. Mydeen asks, will anyone see this as a curb to freedom of speech ?

[Siber Party of Malaysia \(M\)](#)

28. Strada Lunii

[23 January 2007 09:04](#)

28

what 'freedom of speech'?? that is only text book words equals to 'being able to say anything, anywhere, directed to anyone, insult, annoy, harrass bla bla .. everything under the sky without being punished by the court of law' ... that is what freedom of speech is all about.

29. Dek Mat

[23 January 2007 11:39](#)

29

Monsterblog,

Thanks for unspamming us and to readers sorry for repeats because some comments were done during the enforced spam by Kickdefella...

And to Strada (comment no 28): that's not text book, that's the intepretation by irresponsible ppl who wants to say everything but don't want to defend what they say in court... 😊

30. Joe

[23 January 2007 12:12](#)

30

I like to think that comment #28 underlines the first point made in comment #11. But that's just me.

31. Tom

[23 January 2007 18:03](#)

31

Freedom of speech works parallel with freedom of lawsuits against anyone for any reasons.

Its up to you to gamble your words against his bank account.

Welcome to the New World of Democracy.

32. [Sharizal Shaarani](#)

[23 January 2007 23:36](#)

32

replying to comment no 25 hawaiiichee - as per my [latest post](#) there are other articles in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. Don't we have to pay attention to these too?

Article 12.

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with his privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to attacks upon his honour and reputation. Everyone has the right to the protection of the law against such interference or attacks and

Article 30.

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

33. Jango Ang

[24 January 2007 01:08](#)

33

Jeff, you have the guts to run down people, but do you have the balls to face the consequences. Be a man, go the court and face your accusers. don't hide behind your sycophants' skirts. don't tell the whole world you are innocent.

34. [A M Ubaidah S](#)

[24 January 2007 23:57](#)

34

Nice one dude, but I wonder if Pak Lah's recent statement causes some additional concerns, besides the fact that he may have inappropriately gone partisan on what is a civil suit... as I (shamelessly) plug...

<http://thoughtsintangents.blogspot.com/2007/01/can-pak-lah-afford-to-be-partisan.html>

35. Tanglimara

[25 January 2007 01:42](#)

35

I have a simple question for the bloggers who are backing Jeff Ooi and Rocky Bru...what makes them think that bloggers should be exempted from the laws that binds the rest of us ?

Is it the fact that they are operating from the cyberspace gives them immunity that the rest of us don't get to enjoy ? Why should it be ?

Even in the so-called bastions of democracy (the West), you get sued if you write something defamatory. Does this mean that the West restricts free expression ?

The whole argument by bloggers and the so-called free speech brigade has no logic at all.

No one going to question you on your right to free expression if you don't encroach into their right by defaming them. You talk about being a victim, but how about the NST? Whether they are an individual or a mega corporation, they have the right to defend themselves, especially the accusations have been long and highly toxic in nature.

Also it is a huge mockery to brand people like Jeff and Rocky Bru as defenders of freedom of expression.

I used to read their posts but has stopped that long ago. If one bothers to read their posts, he/she will realise that their posts are driven by self interest and hidden personal agenda. Their comments tend to be baseless accusations and highly personal. In fact I am surprised that the NST only suing him now.

To Logan's comments (post #20), come on, do you think these two guys will publish the NST's rebuttal? One of reasons why I stopped visiting Screenshots is that Jeff only allows comments that supports him. The moment you disagree with him, he bans you. Jeff doesn't practise what he preaches.

The kind of accusations that Jeff and Rocky threw at the NST have been highly toxic and personal in nature. If they have the guts to say something, then they should have the guts to defend it. Don't go hide behind the skirt of human rights / free speech brigade.

36. [Joe](#)
[25 January 2007 12:15](#)
36

One could say that JO and RB are like XX in the way the drum up their own band of supporters; but without the cupcake titties. LOL

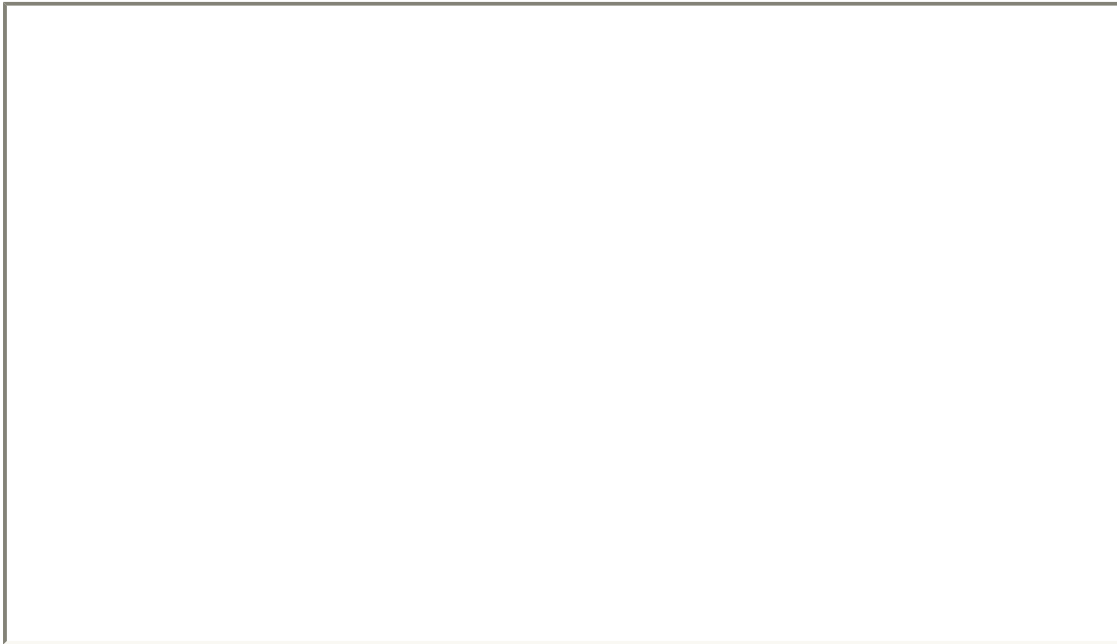
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