

The Centre for
Postnormal Policy
& Futures Studies

29 - 15
SEPT OCT

20
23

KL Jazz and Art Centre
Wisma Ypr, Taman Seputeh,
58000 Kuala Lumpur

**NOT
YOUR
NORMAL
EXHIBITION**

**WELCOME TO
POSTNORMAL
TIMES**



The International Institute
of Islamic Thought, East
and Southeast Asia

'Normal' has evaporated.

Postnormal Times (PNT) is a description of the rapidly changing nature of our world. Change itself is changing. Our world, dominated by accelerating change, has become increasingly complex, riddled with contradictions, and left to the mercy of chaotic events. Postnormal Times is also a transitional phase –

POSTNORMAL TIMES

‘an in-between period where old orthodoxies are dying, new ones have not yet emerged, and very few things seem to make sense’

We are thus perilously ‘hanging between the **“no longer”** and the **“not yet”** and thus we are necessarily unstable – nothing around us is fixed, not even our direction of travel’.

It is a time without the assurance that we can return to any past we have known and with no confidence in any path to a desirable, attainable, or sustainable future.

As such, PNT is not merely another ‘post’—such as post-industrial, post-ideology, post-liberal, postmodern—not a concept for analysing and deconstructing. Rather, it is a theory of the changing nature of change that aims both at diagnosis and prognosis.

In normal times, we have confidence in our facts and values, and we can take our time in making correct and appropriate decisions. In PNT, the future feels like a runaway train barrelling into the unknown – ‘facts are uncertain, values in dispute, stakes are high and decisions urgent’.





THE EXHIBITION, BOTH AN ART INSTALLATION AND A PEDAGOGIC RESOURCE, BRINGS THE MAIN FEATURES OF PNT TO THE FORE.

It represents Postnormal Times as a calling: an invitation to examine current developments that would radically transform our world – leading to existential threats – and to challenge our assumptions and biases about our contemporary times and the possibilities for the future. It is specifically designed to interrogate our sense of what is and is not 'normal'; illustrate the basic characteristics of PNT and its drivers; explore challenges and potentials for our common futures; and to ascertain the values we need to navigate postnormal times.



**PNT DID NOT ARRIVE FROM NOWHERE.
IT WAS NOT AN INSTANTANEOUS REVELATION.
LIKE ALL THINGS, IT EXISTS IN TIME,
ARISING THROUGH A SERIES OF OBSERVATIONS
– IT ALSO COMES TO DIFFERENT CONTEXTS
IN DIFFERENT WAYS AND AT DIFFERENT TIMES.
IN OUR FAST-PACED, INTERCONNECTED WORLD,
MORE AND MORE WE ARE SEEING THINGS THAT,
WHEN PAUSED TO REFLECTED UPON,
PROVOKE ONE CRITICAL QUESTION:**



Post-Truth:

Lies and other forms of misinformation are not new phenomenon. But the volume of information produced each day, and the speed at which it travels, makes sorting fact from fiction virtually impossible. Truth has become relative while technology toys with our ability to detect what is real from what is not. The death of expertise leaves truth at the discretion of the court of internet mobs.

AI Revolution:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers opportunities for technological and big-data analytical advancement alongside societal anxieties and existential fears. Concerns around inbuilt bias in AIs demonstrate the real fear that, while our technology may advance, the problems of inequality, racism, xenophobia, and tendencies towards fascism persist. Old questions resurface around the ever-blurred uncanny valley, forcing us to rethink what makes us human and what happens when we let the machines do our thinking for us.

Genetic Blend:

The manipulation and editing of genes are a double-edge sword. On one hand, there is the opportunity for the advancement of medical technology in order to prevent and eradicate certain disorders and diseases. On the other hand, is the ability to prioritise social and cultural norms related to human beauty, ability, and physique. Beyond the threat to diversity and multiculturalism, genetic technologies are also being used for a new generation of targeted attacks and warfare. The dangers of playing in a sandbox that we lack significant understanding of are endless.

Climate Catastrophe:

Indisputable scientific facts shows that the human race is having an irrevocable impact on the planet. For too long, climate change has been cast as a future problem. But today we are experiencing climate change in real time. Its affects are playing out more speedily and chaotically than previously modelled. Simultaneous, natural catastrophes are making the globe uninhabitable, striking hardest the poorest and the most disadvantaged communities. We have moved rapidly from 'climate change' and 'global warming' to 'climate crisis' to 'climate emergency' and, as the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has declared, to 'the era of global boiling'.

WHAT JUST HAPPENED?

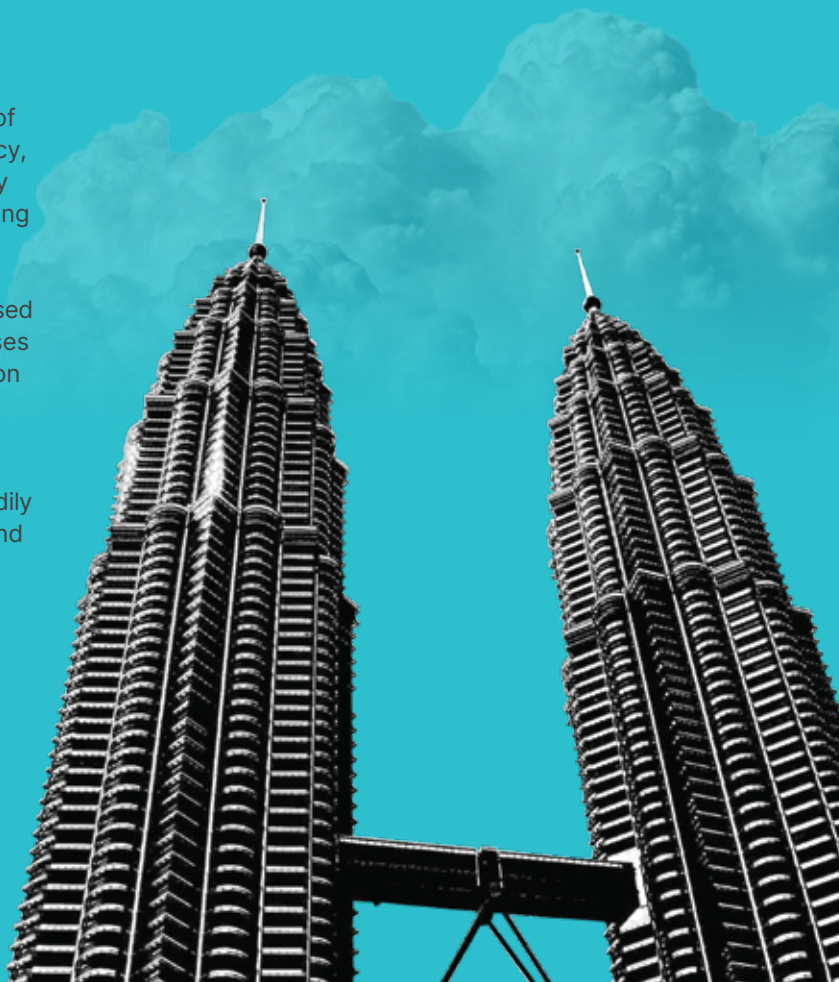


Covid Halt:

The ability of a microscopic virus to bring the Earth to a grinding halt provides a prime, real-world example of how our world and our lives are changing. As the world stood still, the clock kept ticking – everything from travel to shopping, tourism, supply chains, economics, our everyday lives, and even basic human-to-human contact were severely disrupted – signifying the changing nature of change radically in a short period of time.

Degrading Governance:

Our ossified traditions of governance – which survive by evading the once essential values of transparency, legitimacy, and trust – are woefully ill- equipped for emerging issues, societies, and technologies in an interconnected globalised world. Planet-wide crises from financial corruption to pandemics have exposed the cracks in our flawed political systems, which are readily abused by extremist and authoritarian interests. Images: Some good images will be created here for the exhibit, perhaps check with Effusion or anything from recent Malaysian protests could work nicely also.





SO, WHAT IS GOING ON?

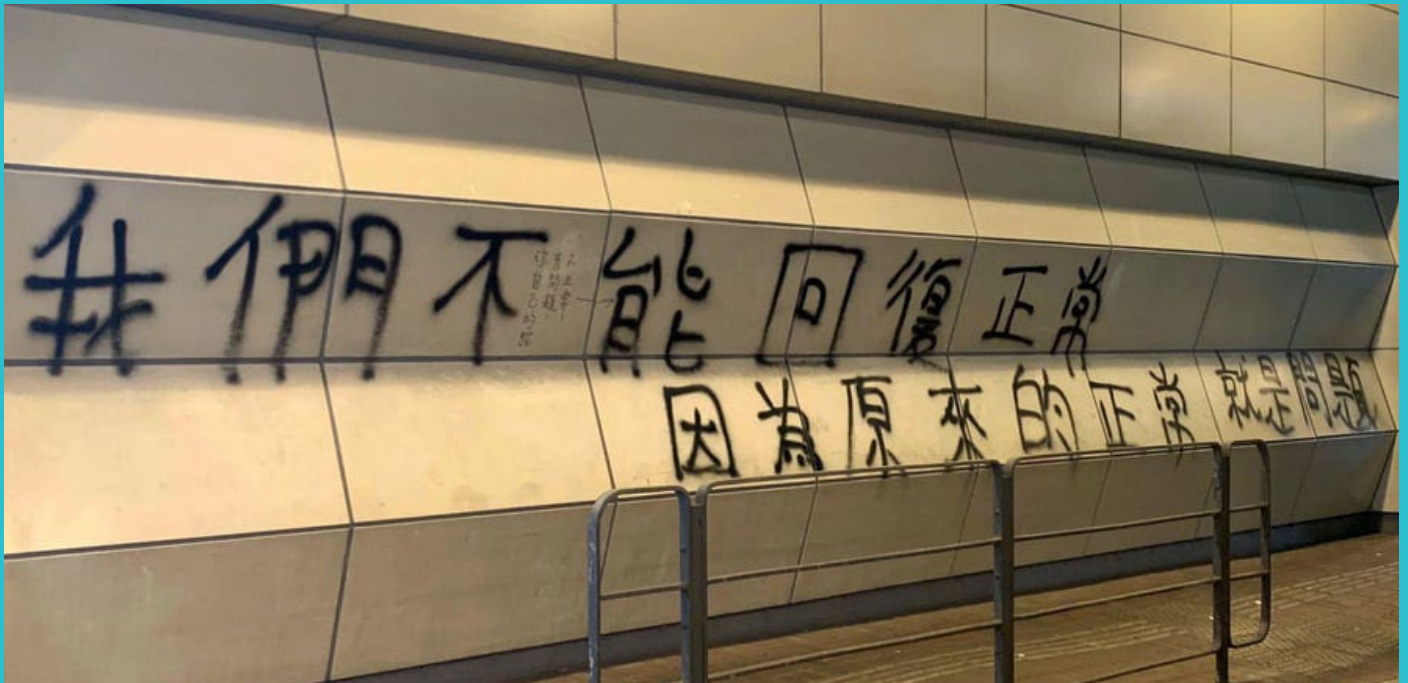
Since the beginning of this new millennium, a variety of thinkers have tried to put a name to all the strange and unprecedented occurrences that have filled the headlines of the 2000s. But they are all essentially saying the same thing – normal, what we have taken for granted, is untenable.



Justine Sacco's Experience

On 20 December 2013, Justine Sacco, the 30-year-old senior director of corporate communications at IAC, made the long trip home from New York City, US to Cape Town, South Africa for the holidays. She posted the following 'jokey tweet' before getting on the flight: By the time she landed in Cape Town, she was the No.1 Worldwide Trend on Twitter with **#Has-JustineLandedYet**. Within 3 weeks of the tweet, she was ordered to clean out her desk at IAC. She was single and unable to date. This trip home demonstrates how the 4S's drove the overlapping of the 3C's resulting in a very postnormal experience for Sacco.

WE HAVE ENTERED POSTNORMAL TIMES



**“We can’t
return to normal,
because the normal
that we had
was precisely
the problem.”**

This is a transitional period, between two ages rather than the start of a new one. We need to balance the old and the new while seeking to transcend and navigate the hurdles that arise along the way.

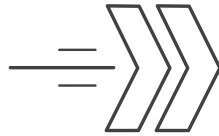
In postnormal times, if it rains, it always pours. A simple, careless tweet can have global ramifications...

The 4S's



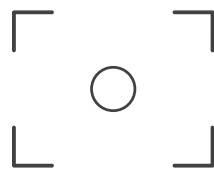
Speed

Change is happening at a constantly accelerating rate. Acceleration itself is accelerating. We see this most readily in the evolution of technology and the 24-hour news cycle, but it permeates every level of society, even our thinking which has reduced from years, to weeks, days, hours, even seconds. New makes old obsolete at an unprecedented pace. The rich get richer at superspeed while the poor, get poorer in equal step.



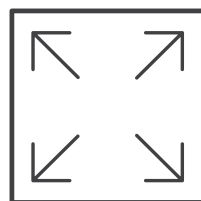
Scope

As things are moving faster, the world is also becoming a smaller place as scope is blowing up. Technology and air travel allow things to move and become global with little effort and at rapid pace. Social media allows for individuals and insignificant local events to go viral, becoming global sensations. A small, localised event can take place across large territories and on opposite ends of the globe at great speed; a virus in a small village can transform into a global pandemic in a matter of days, bringing the world to a grinding halt.



Scale

The blurring of the lines between global and local continues as our notion of scale shrinks. Events, now being global, transgress the wide world to distant lands, down to the individual level. No man is an island and a butterfly's wings flapping on one side of the world will come for all. Climate Change, financial crisis, supply-chain disruption, pandemics, and a wide host of disruptions are felt in every part of the world. Individuals cannot ignore what happens in remote corners of the planet thinking they will not be engulfed in its effects.



Simultaneity

The belligerence of speed, scope, and scale make the situation all the more volatile in the face of proliferating simultaneity. Events, particularly crises, do not occur in vacuums or move nicely in an orderly queue. They are happening all at the same time, overlapping in their disruptions and confounding conventional strategies to cope. Different types of events occur side by side, a political crisis accompanies economic disruptions accompanies social strife and on the great dance goes.



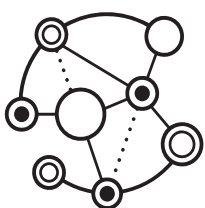
POSTNORMAL
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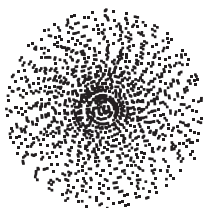
The 3C's

Speed, scope, scale, and simultaneity set the stage for postnormal change, rolling out the red carpet for the **3C's**, which stand at the heart of postnormality: **Complexity, Chaos and Contradictions.**



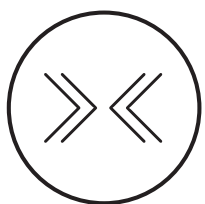
COMPLEXITY

Complexity is found within systems that have many inputs and outputs. It is an assessment of relationships and interconnections. Complex systems have two essential features: they have substantial uncertainties that cannot be managed as 'risks'; and they have a multiplicity of legitimate perspectives. When a complex system consists of networks, in which independent parts are connected and interact with each other, it can generate positive feedback: a loop mechanism that amplifies things substantially. A complex, networked system is prone to turbulent behaviour that can sometimes result in chaos. Climate, organisms, ecosystems, social organizations and human cultures, the brain, and health delivery services are examples of complex systems.



CHAOS

Chaos is an opening where radical change emerges. It is simultaneously a breakdown of norms and the birth of something new. Chaos is the outcome of a great many independent variables interacting in many different ways in a networked complex system. Small perturbations in the system can lead to big consequences – the so-called 'Butterfly Effect'. Such systems have the ability to balance order and chaos. This balancing point is called the edge of chaos: it is where the system is in a kind of suspended animation between stability and total dissolution into turbulence.



CONTRADICTIONS

Contradictions are logical inconsistencies and irreconcilable positions. They are often the result of systemic imbalances and structural inequities. A complex system has many positions that are logically inconsistent, and complex systems at the edge of chaos even more so. Contradictions, which are irreconcilable views and perspectives, cannot be resolved: they can only be transcended. In other words, contradictions must be synthesised and necessitate the formulation of a new position that incorporates most of the various different positions. Contradictions often provide the first signs that a system is moving towards complexity, chaos, and eventually postnormality.



Ignorances And Uncertainties

When complexity, chaos, and contradictions converge and PNT emerges, there is - not surprisingly - a substantial amount of ignorance and uncertainty, which shape how we understand the present and imagine futures. PNT theory takes a layered approach to Uncertainty and Ignorances.

Surface uncertainty strikes us when we see change unfolding but remain unsure about its direction and overall impact.

Shallow uncertainty comes upon us when we feel ourselves moved by powerful currents of change and realize that we inhabit a shifting landscape.

Deep uncertainty speaks to the ways in which radical change can foster feelings of groundlessness and unfathomable possibilities.



Plain ignorance is a lack of factual knowledge — misunderstandings of other cultures, worldviews, and ways of living.

Vincible ignorance is born from nostalgia and must be confronted by new ways of learning.

Invincible ignorance is a deep-seated fear of the future that can only be overcome by experiencing alternatives and unlearning that which keeps us in the dark.



MENAGERIE

Postnormal times cannot be **'controlled'** or **'managed'**. It can only be navigated. But to navigate PNT, we need the capability and awareness to spot incipient change, and come to understand our own perspective on various scales of present trends and emerging issues. We need to anticipate if a trend or emerging issue, in a globalised, interconnected, complex world that is rapidly changing, has the potential of going postnormal.

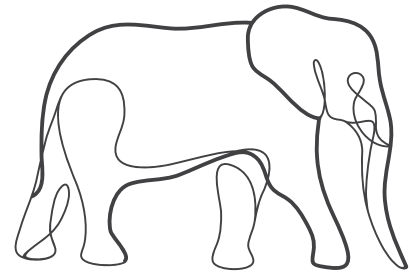
We need to understand not just moments of seismic disruption or substantial innovation, but also what is seen and unseen from a variety of perspectives. The Menagerie of Postnormal Potentialities is a metaphorical tool that helps us appreciate perspective, focuses on our ignorances, and points to the uncertainties lurking behind them. It consists of three categorical typologies: **Black Elephant**, **Black Swan**, and **Black Jellyfish**.

Black Elephants

are extremely likely and widely predicted events that are ignored or downplayed by many in a given context or a society as a whole.

From our perspective, Black Elephants challenge us to ask:

What are most people missing or not seeing?

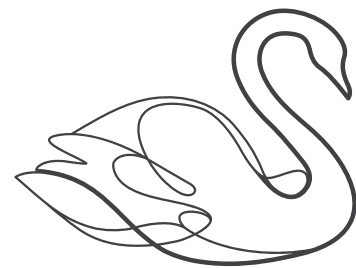


Black Swans

are 'outliers', things totally outside and way beyond our observations. They seem to appear "out of the blue" and disrupt things at a systemic level.

From our perspective, Black Swans demand that we query:

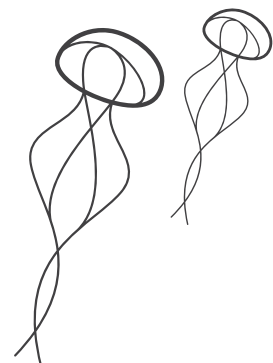
What do people think would never happen?



Black Jellyfish

symbolise phenomena and/or events that are driven by positive feedback into a state of chaos. From our perspective, Black Jellyfish require us to consider:

What can or might lead to chaos?



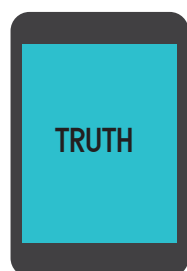
TIMELINE

How do we differentiate between our contemporary Postnormal Times from previous eras and epochs?

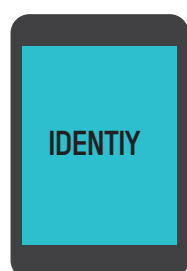
The 'Contemporary Period' generally covers history still in living memory. Traditionally, we believed that living memory goes back about eighty years. So, it is roughly the period spanning from the Second World War, which marks the emergence of the Atomic Age, separates the past eras, and is considered the newest stage of world history - the present time. But in present time accelerating change continues to shrink and collapse historical periods.

The Timeline divides the Contemporary Period into Classic (1920-1950), Modern (1950-1980) and Postmodern Age (1980-2005). In 2006, 'to google' became a verb, was added to the eleventh edition of Merriam -Webster's Collegiate Dictionary and signalled the emergence of Postnormal Times.

The Timeline explores and distinguishes between these periods by showing how certain traits – such as Meaning, Truth, Identity, Systems, Key Concepts, Pandemics, Marriage, Nature, Knowledge, Technology, and Gender – changed from one period to another.



Truth	Truth	Truth	Truth
			
Defined	Monolithic	Relative	Contradictory, 'Post-Truth'
CLASSIC	MODERN	POST MODERN	POST NORMAL



Identity	Identity	Identity	Identity
			
I am tradition and culture	I am Science and technology	I am What I buy	I am Online
CLASSIC	MODERN	POST MODERN	POST NORMAL

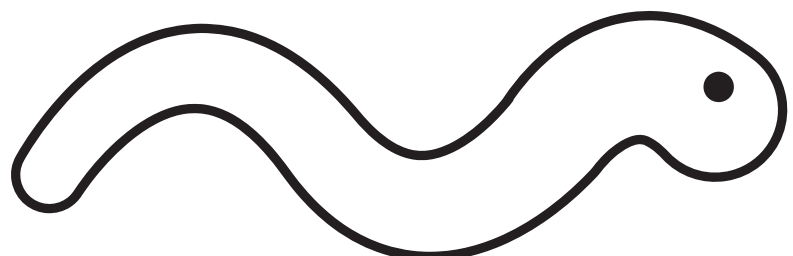
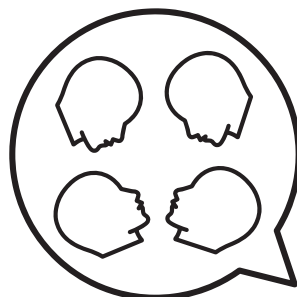
WHERE NOW?

**Postnormal Times
takes us into terrain
uncharted.**

We need to develop complex approaches to our complex problems and issues. We need to work out a way to transcend contradictions that lie before us. We need to foresee approaching chaos, to avoid living at the edge of chaos. We must find a way to live with uncertainty, appreciate our ignorances, and understand and respect other perspectives. We must move beyond dialogues into polylogues. For the sake of our futures, it is essential for us to invigorate our creativity, push the boundaries of our imagination and bring ethics to the forefront.

In short, we need new ways of

Being
Doing
Knowing – and
Loving.





**PLEASE,
DO NOT
EXIST
THROUGH
THE GIFTSHOP!**





REDtone



DORSETT



LAND PACIFIC
太平洋地產

IMAGE ATTRIBUTIONS

POSTNORMAL TIMES

Road Crack

<http://images.bernama.com>

Malala Yousafzai

Pakistan's Malala Yousafzai gives a speech after receiving the RAW (Reach All Women) in War Anna Politkovskaya Award at the Southbank Centre in London October 4, 2013. (Luke MacGregor/Reuters)

Flood in Klang Valley

Shutterstock

Polar Bear

climate-change-concept-collage
Freepik

AI: Sophia, First Robot Citizen at the AI for Good Global Summit 2018. Author: ITU Pictures. CC BY 2.0.

<https://tinyurl.com/jcy724uh>

WHAT JUST HAPPENED

Trump:

Donald Trump speaking at CPAC 2011 in Washington, D.C.

Author: Gage

Terminator

robot cyborg sci terminator robots HD wallpaper
| Pxfuel

Heartwarming-detailed-portrait-baby-snapshot

Freepik

Whale-

climate-change-concept-collage
Freepik

Mecca Covid

- rts34z8z

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Bersih Demonstrator

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Batang Kali Landslide

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FREE-kuala-lumpur-twin-towers-5910805

SO, WHAT'S GOING ON?

Hand tweeting

Freepik

WE HAVE ENTERED POSTNORMAL TIMES

Graffiti

"We can't return to normal, because the normal that we had was precisely the problem."

https://www.reddit.com/r/HongKong/comments/efggfw/graffiti_reads_we_cant_return_to_normal_because/

THE 4S'S

Earth

planet-3d-with-south-america-centered-generative-ai

Freepik

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C Scott Jordan

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Eda Suhana Sharudin

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