

# BIMSTEC Newsletter

A Monthly Newsletter from BIMSTEC Centre



Volume 29  
July 2009

## BIMSTEC Outlook

### Buddhist Lent Festival

The tradition of **Buddhist Lent** or the annual three-month Rains Retreat dates back to the time of early Buddhism in ancient India and is the time for all holy men, sages, and mendicants to spend 3 months of the annual rainy season in permanent dwellings.

The first full moon day of this period was the day that Buddha delivered the very first sermon to five disciples on this day 25 centuries ago. He expounded the 4 Noble Truths; namely, Suffering, the Origin of Suffering, Cessation of Suffering, and the Path that leads to Cessation of Suffering.



The Buddhist Lent means the day when Buddhist monks take a vow to remain only at one particular place or temple, sheltering away from the sun and the rainstorms. Monks also suspend their traveling during this period when crops grow in order to avoid accidentally stepping on saplings.

### Waso Festival in Myanmar



#### Inside this issue:

BIMSTEC Outlook	1-3
BIMSTEC Upcoming Activities	3

**Waso** (July), the fourth month of Myanmar calendar, is a special month for Buddhists. It is the month when the Gautama Buddha was conceived in his mother's womb, the month of Buddha's renunciation of the worldly matters, and the preaching of his first sermon. The month also marks the beginning of the Buddhist Lent. It is a time for sobriety, self-denial and religious contemplation. Buddhist monks enter into a monsoon retreat, and they have to reside at one place for three months from the Full Moon day of **Waso** (July) to the Full Moon day of **Thadingyut** (October). Residing in one monastery is called **Waso** or **Wah-kutt**.

*Continued on next page →*

## Waso Festival in Myanmar



In order that monks have necessary amenities during the Lent, laypeople offer monastic robes, food and other necessities. The "soon" (rice and curry) is offered to the monks by volunteer service groups from their local areas. On the Full Moon Day of Waso, called Dhamma Cakka Day, robes and soon are offered to the monks by organizations and individual families. Many People go to pagodas for worship and to monasteries for Sabbath. There is also a practice of young men and women going on outings to gather flowers to be offered to Buddha images.

A significant practice of Waso is the offering of monk's robes to members of the Sangha for use during the lent, so these robes are called **Waso robes**. Likewise, there are also big candles called **Waso candles** offered at this time of the year. Events such as marriages and moving from one house to another and for monks moving from one monastery to another are avoided.

## Khao Pansa Festival in Thailand

In Thai, Buddhist Lent, also known as "**Khao Phansa**", is a time devoted to study and meditation. Buddhist monks remain within temple grounds and do not venture out for a period of three months starting from the first day of the waning moon of the eighth lunar month (in July) to the fifteenth day of the waxing moon of the eleventh lunar month (in October).

Thai Buddhists engage in merit-making by making offerings as an expression of respect and gratitude by making offerings to Lord Buddha, venerable monks, past and present kings, and to parents, grandparents and their ancestors.

Making merit relates strongly to the concept of rebirth. The accumulation of merit, or *bun*, is believed to exert a powerful influence on one's future life and, indeed, rebirths.

According to Buddhist teachings, all actions performed in our daily lives affect our field of merit, but none more so than the support of Buddhism itself. When one offers material support to a Buddhist monk – be it alms in the form of food or donations, or voluntary work – one is helping to assure that Buddhist teachings live on. This accumulates merit not only for the giver by helping sustain Buddhism but also for future generations to make and accumulate merit. In addition to the monk's morning alms round, the presentation of the **Lenten candles** is also a merit-making act.



Source : 1. Myanmar Women's Affairs Federation

< <http://www.mwaf.org.mm/Culture/Myanmar%20Traditional%20Festivals/Details.asp?id=231> >

2. National News Bureau of Thailand <<http://thainews.prd.go.th/en/news.php?id=255207010098>>

3. Ministry of Culture, Thailand <[http://www.m-culture.go.th/cindex\\_1-read15.php](http://www.m-culture.go.th/cindex_1-read15.php)>

## The 4th Thailand International Wax Sculpture



Realising the importance of this wonderful event, the Ubon Ratchathani Province has yearly organised the candle procession, aiming to support the outstanding religious ceremony as well as promote this big annual event to be well-known among Thai and international tourists. This year the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has organised the 4<sup>th</sup> Thailand International Wax Sculpture, in the period of Ubon Ratchathani Candle Procession that Buddhist performs the various forms of candle, lining up a parade and offerings to monks on the occasion of the beginning of Buddhist Lent (or on 8 July 2009) This ceremony not only presents the faith of Buddhists but also shows the art of wax carving – a well known and unique event in Thailand.

### Festival Highlights

- 1st week: July 1 – 5                      World of Wax and Candles in Thailand
- 2nd week: July 6 – 12                    A Showcase of Buddhism and Arts
- 3rd week: July 13 – 19                   Assembly of Artisans
- 4th week: July 20 – 26                   International Dances: In Harmony
- 5th week: July 27 – 31                   Honouring the Gurus



Source: Event Planning Division, Tourism Authority of Thailand

## BIMSTEC Upcoming Activities

Date	Activity	Venue
6 August 2009	92 <sup>nd</sup> BWG Meeting	Bangkok
30 August–1 September 2009	12 <sup>th</sup> BIMSTEC Ministerial Meeting and 14 <sup>th</sup> Senior Officials' Meeting	Myanmar
2 - 3 November 2009	2 <sup>nd</sup> Ministerial Meeting on Poverty Alleviation	Nepal
<b>Dates to be Identified</b>		
1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting of the BIMSTEC Think Tanks		India
19 <sup>th</sup> Trade Negotiation Committee Meeting		India
2 <sup>nd</sup> BIMSTEC Energy Ministers' Conference		Thailand
5 <sup>th</sup> JWG on Counter-Terrorism and Transactional Crimes		Nepal
1 <sup>st</sup> Meeting of Tourism Working Group		India
3 <sup>rd</sup> Expert Group Meeting on Agricultural Cooperation		-

For further information please contact:

### BIMSTEC Centre

Building No. 20, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
126/22-25 Vibhavadee-Rangsit Rd., Dindaeng, BKK 10400, Thailand  
Tel: (66) 2 692 3162-3; Fax: (66) 2 692 3161  
E-mail: [bimstecinfo@tradestrategies.org](mailto:bimstecinfo@tradestrategies.org)