

World View FPMT News Around the World

INTERNATIONAL

LKPY Announces Be Kind Day, March 31.

Kindness is defined as a quality of being friendly, generous and considerate. Imagine one day every year when everyone makes an effort to embody this quality. To this effect, Loving Kindness Peaceful Youth (LKPY), an FPMT international peace organization, has created Be Kind Day, to be celebrated annually on March 31.



Visit www.bekindday.org for details.

CANADA

New Stupa for Gendun Drubpa Study Group

Lama Zopa Rinpoche has determined that the best place for Ven. Patricia Devoe (Lhundup Chönyi) to build a stupa is at Gendun Drubpa Study Group in British Columbia, Canada.

This past August, Geshe Thubten Soepa travelled to Gendun Drubpa to assist with choosing, blessing and consecrating the site. The task of felling the trees and clearing the land has begun. The sog shin, or life tree, which will go inside the stupa, has been cut down and is stored away for the winter to dry.

As many tsa-tsas are needed to fill space inside the stupa, Gendun Drubpa is offering the opportunity for you to create merit by becoming involved in this project. They are looking for Chenrezig, Medicine Buddha and Vajrasattva tsa-tsas.

Following the winter thaw, Gendun Drubpa plans to begin actual construction. Any contributions for their stupa project are welcome: www.gendundrubpa.com

INDIA

LZR and South Asian FPMT Representatives Attend His Holiness the Dalai Lama Teachings at Sarnath

By Tanya Pascual

From January 8-14, an estimated 30,000 people filled Sarnath, North India to attend His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings on two classical texts, *A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life* by Shantideva and *The Middling Stages of Meditation* by Acharya Kamalashila. In addition to the inspiring teachings, His

Holiness gave a Thousand-Arm Chenrezig empowerment and led a prayer offering ceremony at the Dhamek Stupa in solidarity with the people who had recently suffered from political catastrophes and natural disasters such as in Mumbai, Tibet and China. Later that day, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and the Kopan monks and nuns led another puja in front of the grand stupa as the sun set. On the final day His Holiness gave a White Tara initiation after commenting on the importance of caring for the environment and the adverse effects that global warming was having with a special reference to the Tibetan and Himalayan communities in the audience.

FPMT South Asia Regional Meeting, Sarnath

January 13. In the evening, thirteen members of the FPMT South Asia Region gathered together to hear about the wonderful work that each center and project has been doing in the last year. Doug Allen, the new Principal of the Maitreya School Bodhgaya spoke of the plan to start a vocational training center for tailors and engineers, plus the need for qualified volunteers to spend three months or so working at the already established school. Root Institute, Tushita Mediation Centre and Kopan Monastery all reported the successful completion of construction projects. Also, Lawudo Gompa proposed new construction work and Animal Liberation Sanctuary suggested the likely end of the search for new land after Rinpoche's recent visit. Himalayan Buddhist Meditation Centre, Khathmandu's city center, reported a new location and director. And Lotsawa Rinchen Zangpo Translator Program reported that an impressive number of twenty-two students started the new translator program.

Pilgrimage with Lama Zopa Rinpoche to Ajanta and Ellora

By Thubten Labdron

In November 2008, Lama Zopa Rinpoche was invited to bless a recently constructed temple and a separate land parcel owned by a group of "New Buddhists" at Nasik in

Maharashtra. Nasik is close to Nagpur where, in the 1950s, Dr. Ambedkar (a low-caste Hindu and chief architect of the Indian constitution), having converted to Buddhism, gave refuge to 500,000 Indians in one ceremony.

Rinpoche spent several days meeting the group, answering their questions and offering advice. The people said that although they have the label "Buddhists" they do not have Dharma knowledge and are eager to hear as much Dharma as possible.

Rinpoche blessed the temple and gave an extensive teaching to more than 100 people on the suffering of the six realms, with a detailed explanation on "pervasive suffering," after which Rinpoche gave refuge and lay vows. Ven. Kabir was the Hindi translator.

Nasik also has ancient Buddhist caves, where Lama Chöpa Tsog was offered by candle light and torches. Rinpoche expressed sadness that there were no lights in the caves, and offered to sponsor lights immediately.

Rinpoche also gave teachings and led meditation inside the large stupa at the foot of the caves.

Rinpoche visited the land in the late evening and gave the transmission of Lama Tsongkhapa Guru Yoga and various mantras. The people were also able to view and take blessings from Rinpoche's collection of holy relics. Before leaving, Rinpoche planted a bodhi tree for auspiciousness, and advised the group to build a multi-story Thousand-Arm Avalokiteshvara statue on the land.

Returning from the land to Nasik at about 2:30 A.M., Rinpoche stopped the cars to offer extensive prayers and blessings over the bodies of dead animals on the side of the road.



Prayers for the dead on the road to Mumbai

Rinpoche didn't visit the Ellora caves and arrived at Ajanta about two and half hours before closing time. Even before we arrived in Ajanta, Rinpoche expressed strong interest in the large Maitreya Buddha statue in Cave 16, and advised us to

make strong prayers in front of the statue. Rinpoche advised us to make the visit meaningful, not just tourist sight-seeing, by performing seven limb prayers and prostrations in front of all the holy objects.

Rinpoche mentioned how sad it was that these caves and statues had been lost for hundreds of years, and there were no stories at all about who had meditated in the caves, but that maybe there had been meditators during the time of Nagarjuna. Rinpoche also said we should rejoice at the dedication and work of those who carved and painted the caves and statues.

ITALY

Fire Destroys the Gompa of Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa

By Joan Nicell

On the morning of December 26, 2008, a raging fire completely consumed the main gompa (temple) of Istituto Lama Tzong Khapa, Pomaia, Italy. The fire was caused by a short circuit, perhaps from the lights that had been hung on the altar for Lama Tsongkhapa Day and the Christmas holiday.



When the smoke cleared, it seemed that all that remained were severely charred rafters, blackened walls, the metal frames that had supported the altar and a hall filled with rubble. However, a closer look revealed large reliefs of Thousand-Arm Chenrezig and Buddha Maitreya, hanging intact upon the wall, missing only their paint. These two Buddhas appeared to be smiling softly upon a community initially devastated by the sudden wind of impermanence that had once again swept through the Institute only thirteen months after the cremation of our precious lama, Geshe Jampa Gyatso.

Fortunately, Dagri Rinpoche, who arrived later the same day, immediately put the event in a positive light, explaining that we should see it as a sign that interferences to the Institute had been purified and that as a result the Institute would flourish. A similar message soon followed from Lama Zopa Rinpoche saying “I think what has

happened at Lama Tsong Khapa Institute, with the blazing fire destroying the Gompa, is an auspicious sign that you have overcome all the problems.”

The large clay statues of Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples, and that of Lama Yeshe, had been reduced to chunks of terracotta. The upper parts of the metal statues of Buddha Shakyamuni and White Tara had been badly damaged, whereas the statues of Buddha’s two disciples were nowhere to be found except for their alms bowls. Strangely enough, a small chocolate, unmelted, was found at the Buddha’s heart!

The recently made life-sized papier-mâché statue of Geshe Jampa Gyatso had disappeared but his *dongka*, which had been put inside, was found charred but strangely free of the strong burnt smell that pervaded everything else. Then, bit by bit, the treasures that remained intact were revealed: a statue of Palden Lhamo, missing only its club (she clearly used it against the interferences!); all of the 21 Tara statues that had been offered to the Institute by the students at the end of the Basic Program in 2005; small statues of Lama Tsongkhapa and his two disciples, and a small statue of Amitayus presented a year ago to the Institute by Gomo Tulku.

Rather than rebuilding the gompa, it has been advised to construct a new and larger gompa in a separate building. The Institute is so thankful for the kind donations already received and the proposals for fundraising events people have offered to organize on the Institute’s behalf.

For more information on how you can help build the new gompa please visit: www.iltk.it

JAPAN

Relic Tour Visits Japan

Maitreya Project’s Heart Shrine Relic Tour was an unexpected success in Japan. The SPC of the FPMT Center Do Nak Sung Juk, Takiko Ohtome, had been working many months to bring it about. Although there was not much initial publicity, word of mouth quickly spread and there was nearly always a line of people waiting. One man on a walking stick walked up to look at the relic of Shakyamuni Buddha, and was thrown back off his feet in awe – luckily one of the many young Japanese volunteers organized



Ven. Jinsui Ikawa blessing a guest at the Relic Tour

by Dr. Kawasaki, a principle sponsor of the visit, caught him before he fell. The Relic Tour lasted five days in Tokyo and there is already talk of bringing it back.

For more information on the Heart Shrine Relic Tour, please visit: www.maitreyaproject.org/en/relic/

MEXICO

Mexico’s Experience with Medicine Buddha

Australian monk Ven. Namgyel’s visit to Mexico at the end of 2008 benefited many of its eager students there. Many people from different parts of the country gathered together for a Medicine Buddha retreat in two different places. One teenager at Serlingpa Centre, Zitácuaro, summed up what he learned about meditation from the retreat saying, “it is like a shield that protects my own mind from decaying” while another student reported that her stomach, which used to cause her pain, feels much better.

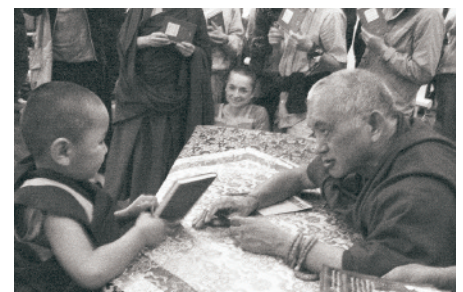
After the retreat, a student concluded that “what we all seemed to come away with as a group was the feeling that we understood ourselves a little bit more, that we had done something useful with our time not just for ourselves but for others, because we were strongly dedicating every day for so many suffering people.”

NEPAL

“How to Be Happy” Sells Out at Book Launch

The launch of Rinpoche’s latest publication, “How to Be Happy,” at the November Course at Kopan Monastery was a sell-out success. All 250 books were sold and there were many requests for more copies. Many people bought three, four, or five copies! It took Rinpoche more than four hours the first day to sign each book. First in line was six-year-old Tenzin Phuntsok Rinpoche, Geshe Lama Konchog’s reincarnation, who was

Tenzin Phuntsok Rinpoche was first in line to have his book signed



later spotted reading the book in English to some of the geshe. Although Rinpoche didn't finish signing all the books, it was an excellent way for each person in the course to come and meet and exchange some words with Rinpoche.

SINGAPORE

Amitabha Buddhist Centre Celebrates 20th Anniversary

By Fiona O'Shaughnessy

Amitabha Buddhist Centre (ABC), Singapore, celebrated its twentieth anniversary with a stylish gala dinner. Guest of honor, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, told the 580 members and friends that he was "extremely happy" with what the Centre had achieved in its twenty-year existence, "the inner prosperity, the Dharma, is the most important prosperity."



Lama Zopa Rinpoche told the delighted crowd the story of how, while on retreat in Nepal in 1985, he felt an overwhelming urge to come to Singapore, to bring Dharma to the people there. It was almost physical he explained, and the thought arose, "must go to Singapore."

The evening commenced with an appreciation award presented to Lama Zopa Rinpoche. Newly-ordained Ven. Chosang (Vivian Seah) delivered the citation: "On the world stage, there are awards to honor those who have made outstanding contributions in their respective fields: the Oscars, the Congressional Gold Medal, the Nobel Prize. Tonight we present the mother of all awards in highest appreciation to our most holy, precious, kind Guru, Lama Zopa Rinpoche." ABC presented Rinpoche with a hand-painted copy of the Heart Sutra written in 24 carat gold ink on 37 large pages.

Awards also went to Tan Hup Cheng for his eighteen years of stewardship as President of ABC, one of the longest held positions in the FPMT history, and resident teacher, Geshe Thubten Chonyi, was awarded for offering ten years of patient and tireless service.

UNITED STATES

A Different Measure of Success: Happiness & Its Causes, San Francisco

By Kate Macdonald

In November, FPMT's Liberation Prison Project and Tse Chen Ling wrapped up the first North American Happiness & Its Causes conference in San Francisco. These conferences were started in 2006 by Vajrayana Institute's Tony Steele.

Some twelve staff members were supported by 150 volunteers, and Liberation Prison Project students in prisons lent spiritual support, doing prayers and practices suggested by FPMT lamas. Over four days, 40 of the best minds in psychology, philosophy, science, business, the arts, medicine and politics provided tools and techniques to improve our lives, jobs and relationships. Speakers included Thupten Jinpa, legendary psychologist Paul Ekman, and Google's Jolly Good Fellow, Chade-Meng Tan.

Despite the best of motivations, many prayers and pujas, and a vast marketing campaign, only 300 people attended the conference.

"Lama Yeshe coined the phrase 'Universal Education' for a secular way of presenting the fundamentals of morality and reality that are at the core of Buddha's view," said Ven. Robina Courtin, the main organizer of the event. "And he would always exhort us to 'Think big!' and 'Be professional!'"

"When you think small, it means you don't think you can do it, you're afraid. And doing it 'professionally' just means doing it well.

"Tony Steele's Happiness conferences embody these three ideas, and we tried to accomplish just that in San Francisco. We lost money (not so professional!), but we touched millions of people through our marketing and the conference itself."

Maitripa College's First Class Graduates, Portland

On January 25, Yangsi Rinpoche and the rest of Maitripa College celebrated the commencement exercises for its inaugural class. Ten students graduated (three of them FPMT International Office staff including *Mandala* assistant editor, Michael

Jolliffe), receiving encouragement and advice from their honorary guest, Geshe Sopa Rinpoche. "It was a really beautiful graduation ceremony with excellent advice from our teachers," Ven. Gyalten Mindrol, a graduating student, commented. "[There was] a really profound feeling of accomplishment and kinship with one another as we move into our next phase of learning and practice."

Bay Area FPMT Centers Extend Attendance and Bookstore Discounts to all FPMT Employees

The five Dharma centers of the Bay Area (Vajrapani Institute, Land of Medicine Buddha, Tse Chen Ling, Gyalwa Gyatso Buddhist Center, and Machig Labdron Study Group) have decided to work together to extend an attendance discount to all FPMT employees worldwide for teachings and group retreats. FPMT



Maitripa College's class of 2009, with Yangsi Rinpoche, Geshe Sopa Rinpoche and Dr. James Blumenthal.

employees everywhere can receive a 30 percent discount off room/board for all residential retreats and 25-30 percent off bookstores purchases.

STOP PRESS!

Just as *Mandala* was going to press we heard the very sad news that Geshe Tsultim Gyeltsen, dear friend of Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and resident geshe at Thubten Dhargay Ling in Long Beach, California, passed away. Geshe-la was a great teacher in America and was responsible for inviting His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Los Angeles area for many teachings. Please visit: www.tdling.org for more information. ☸

