

Sāsanārakkha

◆ NEWSLETTER OF SASANARAKKHA BUDDHIST SANCTUARY a special project of Taiping Insight Meditation Society ◆ RESTRICTED CIRCULATION ONLY ◆ Issue 6 ◆ Aug 2002 ◆



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GIVING WITH JOY... How wonderful if the joy of giving can sprout before, during and after the event. How Eng Keong (foreground) and his family certainly testify to this in Sasanarakkha Sima on 25 April 2002.

Management Past and Present

An interview with Goh Keat Soon and Ng Kian Chong

24 March 2002 opens yet another chapter unfolding for SBS as a new committee takes over. *Sasanarakkha* talks to the chairperson of the past committee and that of the present to give you an overview of what has been and what will be.

In issue 4 of *Sasanarakkha*, we gave you an account of the transfer of responsibilities from the SBS Pro Tem Committee to the First Management Committee with Goh Keat Soon at its helm.

On 24 March 2002, yet another transfer of responsibilities occurred—the Second Management Committee was formed—with Ng Kian Chong as chairperson. This committee will guide the development of SBS for the next two years. Many

members of the former committee were retained. For example, Bro. Ng, who was then the development manager, is now chairperson, and Bro. Goh, who was chairperson, now stays on as vice chairperson. Together, this new management team paves the way for continuity at SBS.

Sasanarakkha spoke to the past and present chairpersons to find out their hopes and anxieties, their ups and downs as pilots of the Management Committee. Let's hear from them.

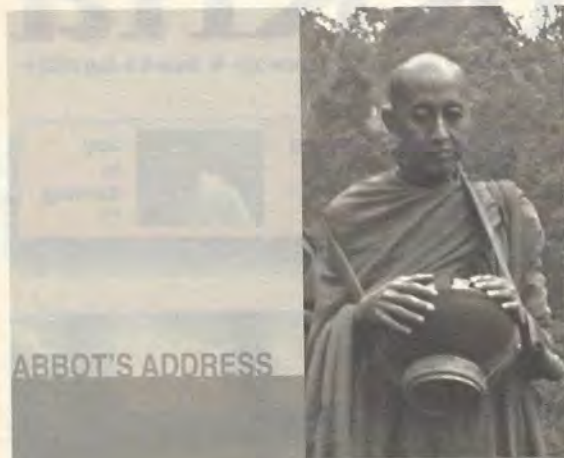


Goh Keat Soon:

When my committee took over from the Pro Tem Committee, we inherited a sizeable bank account that was the result of months of sweat from its members and a 10-acre piece of hilly durian orchard on which stood 2 existing concrete buildings.

Initial construction of the access road and drainage had already begun, with Ooi Eng Huat overseeing the construction. That was 11 March, 2001. My team and I did not know what was in store for us. Now, one year down the road, I must say that members of my committee

◆ TURN TO PAGE TWELVE



Will the Owner PLEASE OWN UP?

With so many generous Buddhist devotees and so few local monks, Sangha members in Malaysia are abundantly supported. While it may take a senior monk in a traditional Theravada country to be offered a kuti or a monastery, a newly ordained Malaysian monk who has just returned from a meditation retreat abroad can very easily get his supporters to build him one.

Getting a kuti built may be easy, but doing it the right way is more difficult—for the way he goes about it could affect his integrity and moral precepts as well as that of other monks. Conscientious monks are rightly concerned over issues about Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary, particularly its ownership. So will the owner please own up?

In the Pali scriptures, 4 types of ownership of monastic dwellings are mentioned explicitly and implicitly. These are:

1. *Sanghika*—belonging to the Sangha of the 4 directions
2. *Ganasantaka*—property of a particular chapter of monks
3. *Puggalika*—belonging to an individual monk
4. *Gahapatisantaka*—property of the laity

Each type of ownership has its own advantages and disadvantages. When SBS was in the process of conceptualisation, I briefed Taiping Insight Meditation Society (TIMS) General Committee and other founding members on the

implications of the various types of ownership. In fact, I had given a talk on the benefits and implications of Sanghika dana—covering this topic as well—earlier in 1999 at Bodhiyarama, Kuala Kubu Baru. After considering the pros and cons of each type of ownership, we decided that SBS (including the land, buildings and all other facilities) should come under the fourth type for the following reasons:

1. **For quality control.** If it were Sangha property, it could be used by any visiting or resident bhikkhu and samanera whether good, bad or ugly.
2. **To be impeccable in the purity of sponsored facilities.** If it belonged to the Sangha or any of its members, canvassing for sponsorship or accepting donations in any way contrary to Vinaya rules would render it impure and thus not allowable for monks to use.
3. **To foster a balanced Sangha-laity management.** If it belonged to an individual monk, he could do whatever he wanted to.

“But if SBS belongs to the laity, then the Sangha will be under their control,” a concerned monk may ask.

Yes, this was also our concern. In my study tours to Wat Pah Nanachat in Thailand, Bodhinyana Monastery in Western Australia, and some forest monasteries in Sri Lanka, I compared various systems of management. Eventually, in collaboration with the founder members of SBS, I opted for a system based on the constitution of Sanghaloka Forest Hermitage, Victoria, Australia, with some modifications to suit our local conditions.

One salient feature of this system is that the Abbot of the sanctuary is also the Spiritual Director of its Management Committee. Any resolution made by the committee can only be effective if it receives the approval of the Abbot. A resident monk can attend committee meetings to voice his opinion too. In the event that the Abbot unreasonably vetoes a committee resolution, it may be brought up in a General Meeting of TIMS, the legal owner of the sanctuary. If the resolution is then passed with a vote of 3/4 majority, the committee has the authority to implement the resolution despite the Abbot's objection.

So in the end, the Abbot would still be under the laity's control, wouldn't he? If the Abbot is so unpopular that his decision cannot be respected by a majority of the society's members, then something must be wrong somewhere. Not all abbots are





dhammika (righteous according to the Dhamma-vinaya), and such a provision will enable justice to take its course.

Although the physical assets of SBS belong to TIMS, the SBS Sangha is entitled to allowable requisites obtainable from the SBS Sanghadayaka Fund. Dayaka means "giver", "benefactor" or "supporter". So "Sanghadayaka Fund" can be translated as "Sangha Benefactors' Fund". In other words, the fund belongs to the benefactors or supporters of the SBS Sangha. Does this mean that the SBS Sangha has no authority over how the fund should be used? To answer this question, we have to understand the purpose and mechanism of this fund.

SBS Sanghadayaka Fund is to be used exclusively for supporting the resident monks (e.g. educational aids and equipment, sewing machine, gas stove, medical fees, travelling expenditure, etc.) in consultation with the Abbot and the resident monks. This fund can also be used for any other meritorious purpose related to the Dhamma-vinaya with the unanimous consent of the resident monks.

When one wishes to make a donation to support the SBS Sangha, one would have to recite the following words:

Bhante, we would like to offer to the SBS Sangha allowable requisites obtainable from this sum of money, which we now deposit in the SBS Sanghadayaka Fund. Whenever a member of the SBS Sangha needs any allowable requisites, please inform the Sangha procurement officer.

The Sangha procurement officer is a monk appointed by the SBS Sangha. The General Administrator (GA) or a member of the SBS Management Committee responsible for Sangha welfare will then invite him to ask for allowable requisites on behalf of the SBS Sangha. When the Sangha procurement officer receives a requisition from an SBS monk, he will obtain the Abbot's approval before submitting it to the GA for further action. If the requisition involves substantial expenditure, the approval of the SBS Sangha may have to be obtained.

Based on established systems of managing forest monasteries, we have tried to formulate one as close as possible to the letter and spirit of the Vinaya. We hope that our efforts will foster a healthy Sangha-laity management.

May the Management Committee function effectively and efficiently. May the resident monks soon be relieved of mundane administrative and management concerns so that they can rightly devote themselves to their monastic duties. SBS

Editorial

As *Sasanarakkha* is one way of bringing SBS to all its loyal supporters, we have kept you updated on happenings here, big or small. At times we feel that it would be more refreshing if, instead of bringing you things from 'inside out', we bring you news and views from people on the outside, looking in.

With this on our minds we have done just that. We hope you will enjoy reading the many letters from not only people who have been here but also from those who haven't.

A number of young volunteers have found spending a holiday weekend doing voluntary work here, including hard labour, a rewarding experience. They bring you their stories and reflections in this issue. Reading them may make you think of SBS when you have a free weekend to spare, away from the hustle and bustle of work or study. There is never a lack of projects for willing hands. 'Nothing ventured, nothing gained.' You may not have adventures as 'exciting' as scooping up mud and debris or being chased by bees, but your efforts will be just as appreciated. You may find fresh air and mineral water that does not come from a bottle just as exciting.

See you here?

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☒ Congratulations to those of you involved in working so hard towards such a noble project such as SBS. With Bhante guiding you all, I'm sure that this project will be a great success and would be *the* place to go for all Buddhists in the country and abroad.

It's a great thing, building monasteries. Trust me, both Mun Yee and I have witnessed it in Australia, and being a part of the project gives unlimited contentment. So keep up the good work!!!

Koh Mui Han

☒ Dear Bhante,

Good to hear that you are doing your best to establish a monk training centre and I hope, one day, a Malaysian monks' training university. Hopefully one day our Malaysian monks will have their own monastic order. At present we still depend very much on resources from foreign countries. May the blessings of the Triple Gem be with you in this meritorious project.

Ven. Paññasaddha

☒ Dear Sir,

I visited your website because of my interest in Theravada Buddhism. I must say that it is very informative and one of the best websites. I hope to visit SBS and the Meditation Center if I have a chance to visit Malaysia. You have explained very well the importance of firmly establishing Theravada Buddhism in Malaysia.

I'm from Thailand and I'm very much interested in learning, practising and supporting Theravada Buddhism any way I can. I've visited Sri Lanka and Burma and have seen the Sangha and the upasakas and upasikas in these countries. I really appreciate the Vinaya and the discipline followed by them.

Judging from the objectives of SBS and from what I gather from your website, I'm sure the Sasana will be firmly established in Malaysia in the near future. I wish you all success in educating the Sangha and the public on Buddhism.

Sermsook Patmastana

☒ I am very happy to see that you are now ready to start establishing the Sasana in Malaysia. You were right to wait until you had proper training. Without the Vinaya the Sasana cannot be esta-

blished. My long-time friend, Ven. Dhamma-wiranatha, worked hard for twenty years in the Netherlands and established two very good Mahasi centres, but he has recently disrobed, so I wonder how his disciples will maintain the centres.

Wat Pah Nanachat is an excellent model for training young bhikkhus, and the UK branches at Chithurst and Amaravati are doing well. Unfortunately, they are also losing a high proportion of senior bhikkhus. In my opinion, it is due to insufficient emphasis on Pariyatti.

The former abbot of Wat Pah Nanachat, Ajahn Pasanno, who is now, I believe, in the USA with Ajahn Amaro, was constantly studying the Thai Tipitaka when he was staying at Chithurst. Ajahn Vajiro, who recently visited you, is also very knowledgeable in the Vinaya. He seems to have the right balance between study and practice. Not all members of the English Sangha are so keen on studying the Tipitaka.

I have long tried to persuade Myanmar bhikkhus living in the West to abide strictly by the Vinaya, as was practised by Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. Many teachers come and go, but there is no effort to put down roots through the ordination of new bhikkhus from the native population or second generation Myanmarese living in the UK.

I have designed a website for the Association for Insight Meditation, an organisation I set up in 1995 to propagate Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw's teachings, and those of other leading Burmese meditation masters. The website www.aimwell.org contains many books on Vipassana and related topics.

Bhikkhu Pesala

Editor's note:

Ven. Pesala is an English monk ordained by Venerable Mahasi Sayadaw. He is the author of the book 'The Debate of King Miliinda'.

Ven. Pesala was together with Ven. Aggacitta in 1980 at the Mahasi Centre in Myanmar. In 1983, while the latter was studying at a Pali College in Lampang, he once again met Ven. Pesala, who was there as a visiting monk. It was then that Ven. Aggacitta discussed with Ven. Pesala the need for a monk to be equipped with proper training before setting out to spread the Dhamma.

We would like to express our thanks to all who have written to us. Please also accept our apologies for not being able to publish all your letters. Do continue writing, be it to commend or comment. Please refer to page 27 for our mailing address.

DIALOGUE



Venerable Aggacitta replies to the constructive criticisms and well-intended suggestions of a monk who visited SBS.

I heard Sasanarakkha does not accept non-Malaysian monks. Is this a misrepresentation of Bhante's words? As I understand Bhante to be a very open-minded and helpful person, it seems unlikely that Bhante would set forth such a policy. It would be good if this issue is properly clarified to the Buddhist community to avoid further adverse effects on the growth of Sasanarakkha.

So far, several foreign monks have stayed in the sanctuary. They include Venerables Vajiravamsa (Sri Lankan), Sumangalo (New Zealander), Vajiro (English), Dhammajoti (Singaporean), Virajo (American), and Dhammarakkhita (Australian). Venerable Ajahn Sumedho (from Amaravati, UK) has been invited to stay in Sasanarakkha when he comes to Malaysia in July. The Objects and By-laws of the sanctuary provide for conscientious foreign monks to be accommodated as visitors for a period determined by the Abbot and Management Committee. This will depend on the availability of lodging and other factors.

Bearing in mind Bhante's difficulty in implementing the ideals of Sasanarakkha, I do not want to offer empty sympathy, as I am not able to offer any practical help. But I do sincerely wish for the success of any noble endeavour. Knowing that Bhante is quite engrossed in administrative work, I would like to share some of my thoughts as a silent observer.

Thank you for your good wishes and sharing.

First of all, I think the publicity Sasanarakkha has received and is receiving is not very encouraging for any recluse or potential recluse who wants to join it. The expectation is not very helpful. Monks need to grow freely in the Dhamma. The promises to the community, expressed or implied, give one the impression that one's direction of growth is somewhat predetermined externally, though this may not and should not be the case. Suppose there is a monk who dreams of serving somewhere other than Malaysia, will he be defeating the expectations of the Malaysian supporters who support Sasanarakkha? Suppose there is a monk who wishes to live a life that is very much in keeping with the Dhamma but at the same time is different from the expectations of SBS. Will he feel the pressure—an obligation to repay with his service in the future—when he makes use of the facilities here?

Our expectations, at the basic level, are similar to the frequent injunctions of our Blessed One:

1. *Be restrained according to the vinaya rules, seeing danger in the slightest fault*
2. *Practise sense-restraint by carefully guarding the 6 sense-doors*
3. *Resort to physical seclusion for the practice of meditation*
4. *Teaching what we have learned and practised to fellow monastics (AN 4.160) and to lay supporters (DN 31) out of compassion.*

Gratitude is one of the moral virtues often preached by our Blessed One. In Sigalovada Sutta (DN 31) he clearly explained the mutually supportive relationship between the Sangha and its lay supporters. The lay supporters' gift of freedom from secular affairs—made possible by faithfully providing bhikkhus with the material requisites of life—has to be reciprocated by the gift of the Dhamma, which is two-fold: by example or precept, or both.

Foremost is the example of an ideal bhikkhu who is morally disciplined, sensually restrained, mindful, contented, solitary and meditative. Such a one reflects the Sangha that practises well and is therefore worthy of reverence and offerings. Such a one is also "the incomparable field of merit for the world." That would be the type of reciprocation required in terms of setting a good example so that "those who are not yet pleased will be pleased and those who are pleased will increase in number."

The other form of reciprocation, which is less introverted and more "socially engaged", is sharing the Dhamma with the lay supporters by radiating loving-kindness, giving moral guidance, teaching, discussion, etc.

Ideally all good monks, whether at SBS or elsewhere, should "pay" for their sponsored requisites by giving gifts of the Dhamma according to their preferences. I think Malaysians would prefer competent Malaysian monks to teach and guide them. However, lay devotees should also be advised by competent Dhamma teachers to accept the workings of kammic affinity with sympathetic joy (mudita) or at least with equanimity (upekkha).

Secondly, there is this general impression, rightly or wrongly, that Sasanarakkha is a Vinaya-school for monks. I am afraid this will put off some genuine spiritual seekers, especially beginners. They are drawn to don the robes not (as yet) out of love for the Sasana nor for the liberation of other sentient beings, but rather for self-purification; for a taste of the Noble Dhamma themselves. It is difficult for a person who is yet to get a satisfactory and convincing taste of Dhamma—the sole purpose for which the Buddhas set the Dhamma wheel rolling—to appreciate the deep significance of the ten purposes of the Vinaya as laid down by the Buddha. And among those who know the Dhamma and have sufficient wisdom to appreciate it, true Vinaya wisdom belongs to only a few.

Undoubtedly a monk's life commences with emphasis on the Vinaya, from the time of higher ordination. Having said this, I also think that a basic understanding of Vinaya that is directly relevant to his daily life is enough. This area of the Vinaya is not at all sophisticated when he leads a simple life. With this practical Vinaya knowledge, he can plunge into the Dhamma without much delay—for who knows when he will die?

Anyone who has read our prospectus carefully will know that SBS is not merely a Vinaya school. Neither is it just a meditation 'factory', academic institution, or evangelical seminary. Rather we are trying to implement a holistic approach to monk training, inspired by modern forest monasteries and guided by the Pali scriptural tradition.

We influence and are influenced by the environment around us. All caring parents would know the importance of applying this principle to their impressionable children. Newly ordained monks are as impressionable as children. They usually conform to the behavioural norms around them.

The Vinaya may be classified into three broad areas of focus: training for individual development, regulations for harmonious communal life and Sangha-laity relations. At SBS we try to maintain a high standard of Vinaya discipline, in theory and especially in practice, so that we can grow and prosper in the Dhamma individually and as a community, as declared by the Blessed One (DN 16).

At the same time, SBS monks are also encouraged to be restrained and mindful throughout the day; to practise formal meditation during their free time, especially when it is dark; and to take care of their physical health by exercising regularly. They will also be urged to participate in full-time meditation retreats at appropriate times.

I know Bhante to be both a monk of Vinaya and a man of Dhamma. But does the public or our target community know it? It is important that people correctly understand Bhante to be not only a trainer of monks in Vinaya, but a 'complete' monk—a good human being, a man on the path to holiness, indeed towards sainthood—as well. Then only can they appreciate Bhante's concern for the Vinaya and the Sasana.

Thank you for the compliment. I have declined several requests to conduct meditation retreats for fear of being distracted from the primary objectives of SBS. As you know, there is a great demand for meditation guidance throughout the country. If I were busily engaged in conducting retreats here and there, how should I find the time to train the monastics at SBS? At least some local monks are interested in teaching Dhamma or meditation or both. Are there many—or any others—interested in giving holistic monk training?

Thirdly is my personal concern for Bhante's well-being. It is a common phenomenon in any newly grown spiritual community that the leader becomes bogged down with so many diversified concerns that he neglects himself. When this happens, SBS will be found wanting. For a potential student who seeks a competent teacher, what is important is not how many people shower love (whether they know how or not) on the teacher, or how much money has been contributed to build his kuti. Neither is it important how many working

“Since SBS was set up more than a year ago, my involvement in its development has provided tremendous opportunities for spiritual growth and maturity that would not have been possible in a life of solitude.”

hours have been spent on the plants and the surroundings nor how many people have noticed his photographs in the newsletter. The list goes on and on.

What matters is the confidence that arises in him when he meets his teacher. This is something beyond description. And this is why the spiritual leader in any spiritual community is so important. He is the 'soul' of the group, so to speak. No frequency of media reports, no amount of financial support and no number of helpers can replace the invaluable silent and unconscious spiritual radiation from a spiritual leader. It is this spiritual charisma that cements a solid core.

I appreciate your observation. However, I believe that the indescribable surge of faith in a pupil for his teacher is much a matter of spiritual sensitivity and kammic affinity.

Does a leader allow himself to be burdened with miscellaneous community matters beyond proportion? Does he have time to meditate sufficiently everyday? Is he burnt out unnecessarily to the point of losing mental poise and spiritual equilibrium and even becomes restless?

Let the grass remain untrimmed, let the flowers remain unattended, let the phone remain unanswered, if need be. Take a spiritual rest, Bhante. Of all the relevant factors for the healthy growth of Sasanarakkha, Bhante alone counts most.

Thank you for sharing your thoughts and concerns. I am deeply touched. I hope the Management Committee will seriously take note of this. However, please do be careful. Both the critic and the criticised should know their own limitations; for it is easy to pass judgement on another based on one's own yardstick and limited perspective.

Venerable Ajahn Brahm told me that it took him more than 15 years of total involvement in all aspects of developing Bodhinyana Monastery, Western Australia, before he could afford to go on a 6-month meditation retreat in solitude. I have enjoyed 10 years of 'socially disengaged' solitude, studying and practising the Dhamma. Since SBS was set up more than a year ago, my involvement in its development has provided tremendous opportunities for spiritual growth and maturity that would not have been possible in a life of solitude. I personally find the experience rewarding and a complementary part of spiritual practice, to be balanced by periodic meditation retreats at appropriate times. Owing to the overwhelming support of Malaysian devotees, the physical development of Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary is progressing at a phenomenal rate. It may take just 5 years or even less for me to follow Ajahn Brahm's footsteps!

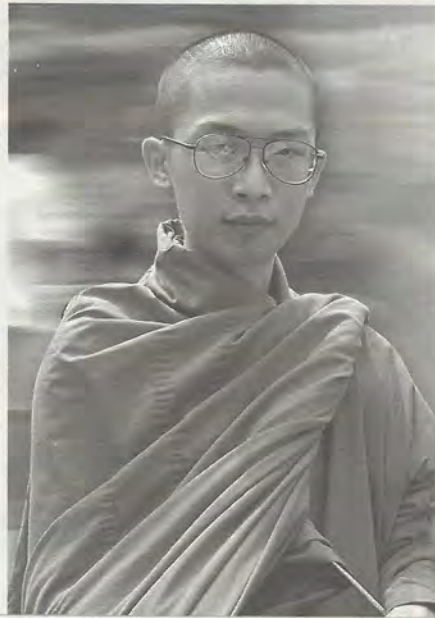
I hope I have not gone too far. I see the need for Sasanarakkha. I see the worth of Bhante's service in Malaysia. I, and all other well-wishers of the Buddha Sasana, long to see the success of the recluse 'factory'—if at all a 'factory' is possible in this field.

May all be well, happy and peaceful.

Sadhu, avuso, sadhu. SBS

An Interview with SBS's First Trainee Monk

Venerable Kumara is SBS's first trainee monk. Here, **Tan Guan Soon** from Sarawak interviews him via the electronic mail.



Bhante, when did you first set foot in SBS?

When I first stayed with Bhante Aggacitta, SBS wasn't ready yet. That was about late January last year. We stayed at Khemarama. Later on, in early February, Bhante Aggacitta shifted to SBS to supervise the construction.

The first time I set foot in SBS was a few days after I had first arrived in Taiping, when I accompanied some Malaysian visiting monks for a visit. After that, I went up about once or twice a week to discuss Pali and Vinaya with Bhante.

I started staying here for long periods only after late June 2001. That was the time when we had our sima making ceremony.

What were your first impressions of SBS? And have they changed since then?

Well, experience had taught me not to be taken in by first impressions, as they tend to be wrong. So, I remember trying to suspend any judgement, though at first sight from across Sungai Tupai, it did look... well... okay.

Anyway, when I actually hiked up SBS with Bhante Aggacitta from Spritzer Mineral Water Factory (where we got our pindapata) for the first time, the 'first impression' that really stayed in my mind was that it was very, very steep. That wasn't the right picture, though. We took a rather steep uncharted way up after wading through the stream. No one walks there now. I certainly wouldn't want to!

Actually, I thought SBS had a serene atmosphere, most ideal for people who like quietude. Now, I still think it is such a place.

Since your arrival in SBS, have you ever encountered any significant problems?

None that I can think of, except perhaps a 'mousy' problem in my kuti. Still can't manage to outsmart the two mice that come gnawing here and there. Trying to chase them away by banging where they're gnawing would only make them angrier, and they'd start gnawing at various places for no

apparent purpose. Bhante asked me to radiate metta, which I did, but it seemed to work just for a few seconds. After that, they'd go back to their gnawing. I'll have to come up with better strategies.

What are your plans for the future? Would you consider making SBS your permanent residence?

If by 'permanent' you mean 'long-term', yes. It'll take some years for me to be properly equipped as a monk. After that, I don't think it would be fair to leave without taking on some teaching duties in return. So, I suppose you could expect me to be here for quite a long while.

Nonetheless, I do intend to take some months off in between for 'sabbatical' meditation retreats.

Presently the infrastructure at the sanctuary has been completed to a great extent, but our local monks who are eligible are not coming forward to participate in SBS's training programme. Can Bhante explain the reasons for such a response?

I don't think it's accurate to say that none are coming forward at all. There've been a few who came and stayed and even participated in our classes, but they have left for different reasons. I believe a couple of them may return later.

I think what you're saying is that the response is poor, considering the grand total enrolment of one monk.

Why is the response poor? I've a few ideas about that based on my interactions with some monks who have been here.

First of all, some monks say that they prefer to just meditate. They believe that meditation practice should be done in an intensive retreat. SBS is not a suitable place for intensive meditation because it is a monks' training centre requiring students to do Vinaya studies as well as attend to other monkish duties.



Paying Tribute

SBS would like to acknowledge with blessings the many gifts in kind, cash and labour that have come our way from near and far, given unconditionally by you.

May the merits that you have accrued through these gifts be your support through samsara.

Without your support, SBS would not have been able to achieve the physical development that it has arrived at to date. The infrastructure has been laid; building and construction have gone according to plan.

Maintenance is always ongoing and that again requires a steady flow of income to enable us to upkeep and run it. For this, we still need to depend on your ongoing support in any form that you are able to contribute. Any little effort on your part will go a long way to help SBS prolong the Buddha Sasana.

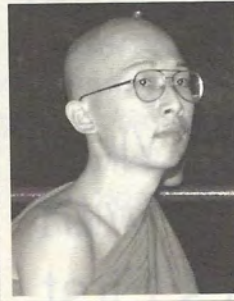
If you wish to help us in our effort to do so through monetary gifts, please send your donations by cheque or bank draft made payable to **TIMS (SBS Project Fund)**, with the donor's name written on the reverse side. You could also pay directly into this fund by banking your donation into the following bank or any of its branches:

Maybank Berhad
A/c No: 50 8300 104239
Branch: Kamunting, Perak, Malaysia

Please send us the pay-in slip if you bank in directly.

As a matter of fact...

Kumara Bhikkhu



When is noon?

Last Sunday, I was at Grand BlueWave Hotel in Shah Alam attending a workshop for Buddhist webmasters. It was about 12.10pm when the keynote speaker finished his address. Almost immediately after that, he walked towards me with an apologetic look on his face.

"I'm so sorry, Reverend," he said while showing me his watch. "It's already past noon."

I smiled and told him not to worry, because the real noon for that day in Shah Alam was 1.12pm; so, I still had about an hour's time for my meal.

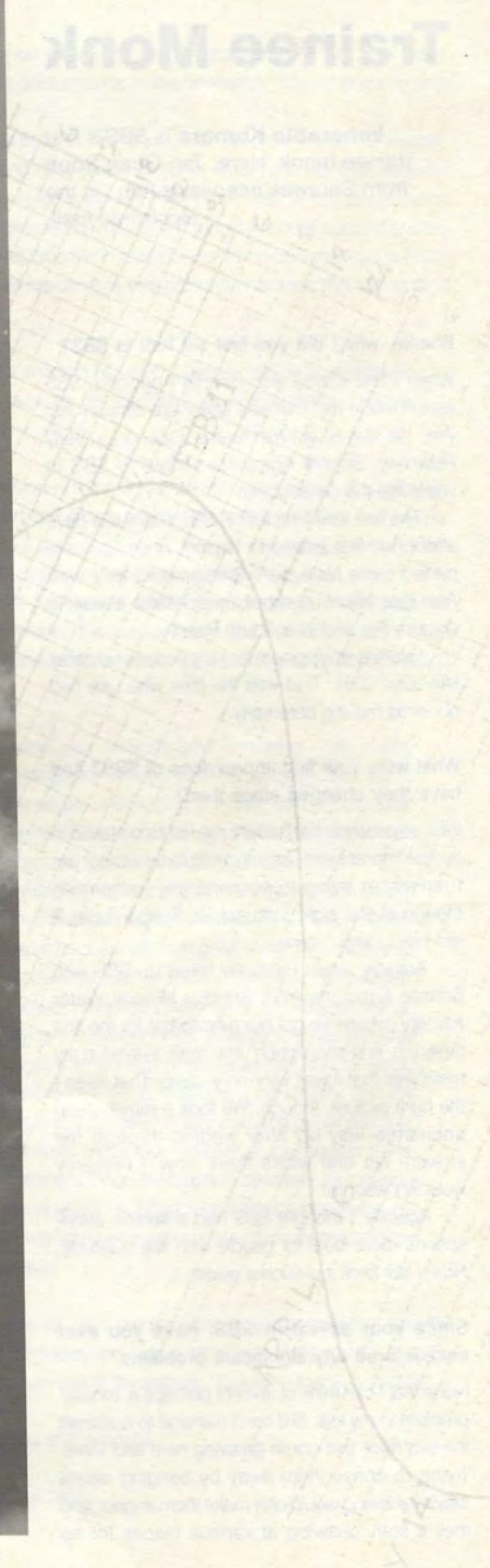
"I've checked." I assured him, seeing that he didn't appear to be utterly convinced.

One of the most well-known rules for Buddhist monks is that they are not allowed to eat after noon. Technically speaking, the rule requires all Buddhist renunciates to abstain from eating food at the wrong time. "Wrong time" here refers to the period between noon and the next dawn.

When is noon? Most of us would think that it is the time when the clock says "12:00pm". But, as a matter of fact, that is not the "real noon".

During the Buddha's time, there were no clocks. To tell the time, sundials were used. A sundial shows noon when the sun reaches its highest point (i.e., when it crosses the meridian). In relation to our clock, real noon shifts throughout the year within a range of about 31 minutes. In fact, in Peninsula Malaysia, real noon never occurs at "12:00pm". The earliest possible noon here is about 12:47pm. I'll explain why later.

Let us be clear that the "noon" the Vinaya speaks of is the solar noon, and not the clock noon or zone time noon. This noon follows the sun and not the clock.



*If we can't rely
on our clocks
to tell us
when the real
noon is,
how then are we
supposed to know?*



"So what?" one may ask. Dhamminda Bhikkhu in his book "Dawn and Noon" puts it very clearly:

The difference between apparent solar noon and the zone time noon of a clock means that a monk who eats up till 12 noon according to clock time will commit an offence for eating in the afternoon in certain places and at certain times of the year. However, at other times and places, a monk can eat until after 12 noon clock time and not commit an offence. The same also applies to lay people who have undertaken to observe the precept of abstaining from eating in the afternoon.

For example, if a monk or an eight-precept holder in Moulmien, Myanmar eats past 11.44am on 3 November, he would have committed the offence of eating at the wrong time. However, on 12 February in Balik Pulau, Malaysia, he can eat until 1.33pm and still not commit the offence.

Why is it so? The full explanation is rather complicated and is outside the scope of this article. So, I shall just touch on it briefly:

- The Earth's orbit around the Sun is not circular but elliptical
- The Earth turns at an axis that is tilted about 23 degrees from the ecliptic.
- Our clock time is based on a certain mean solar time decided by the government. (The time zone of Peninsula Malaysia used to be at GMT +0700 some decades ago whereby the solar time and the clock time were quite close. For some reasons, it was shifted three times: 15 minutes ahead on the first two occasions, and 30 minutes on the third. Now, the Malaysian time zone is set at GMT +0800, which is actually more than an hour ahead of what should be the standard time if we take the longitude of Kuala Lumpur as the guide. That explains the apparently late real noon here.)
- Because of the three points above, we see an apparent error between what our clock says and what the sundial says.

Fine and dandy! Now, if we can't rely on our clocks to tell us when the real noon is, how then are we supposed to know? We sure don't have sundials around to tell us.

Fortunately, there are many ways to find out. If you live in a country like Malaysia you can refer to the *zohor* time indicated in a local Muslim calendar. Only the times of the state capitals are given. However, if the longitude of your location is not too far apart from that of the town or city, the time difference is quite negligible. To be on the safe side, give a five-minute allowance. That should be more than enough (for Peninsula Malaysian states at least).

A more accurate but complicated way is to use a formula and a chart showing the equation of time. To explain this formula would be too long for this short article. If you are interested and have access to the Internet, searching the world wide web (using a search engine like Google.com) with the keywords "equation of time" should bring you to helpful websites on the subject. You can even use your findings to build a chart of noon times in your locality for the whole year! If you don't want to go through all that

trouble but want to know the noon time of a particular place and a particular day of the year, you can point your web browser to

<http://geocities.com/venkumara/suntimec.html>

There, you'll find a webpage with a JavaScript program that uses the formula and the equation of time. According to what you specify, it will tell you the times for noon, sunrise and sunset of a particular co-ordinate and date. It is originally from the Surface Radiation Research Branch (SRRB) of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) in the USA. I've modified it to suit Malaysian use. You can save it in your computer, make as many copies of that as you like or even modify it according to your needs.

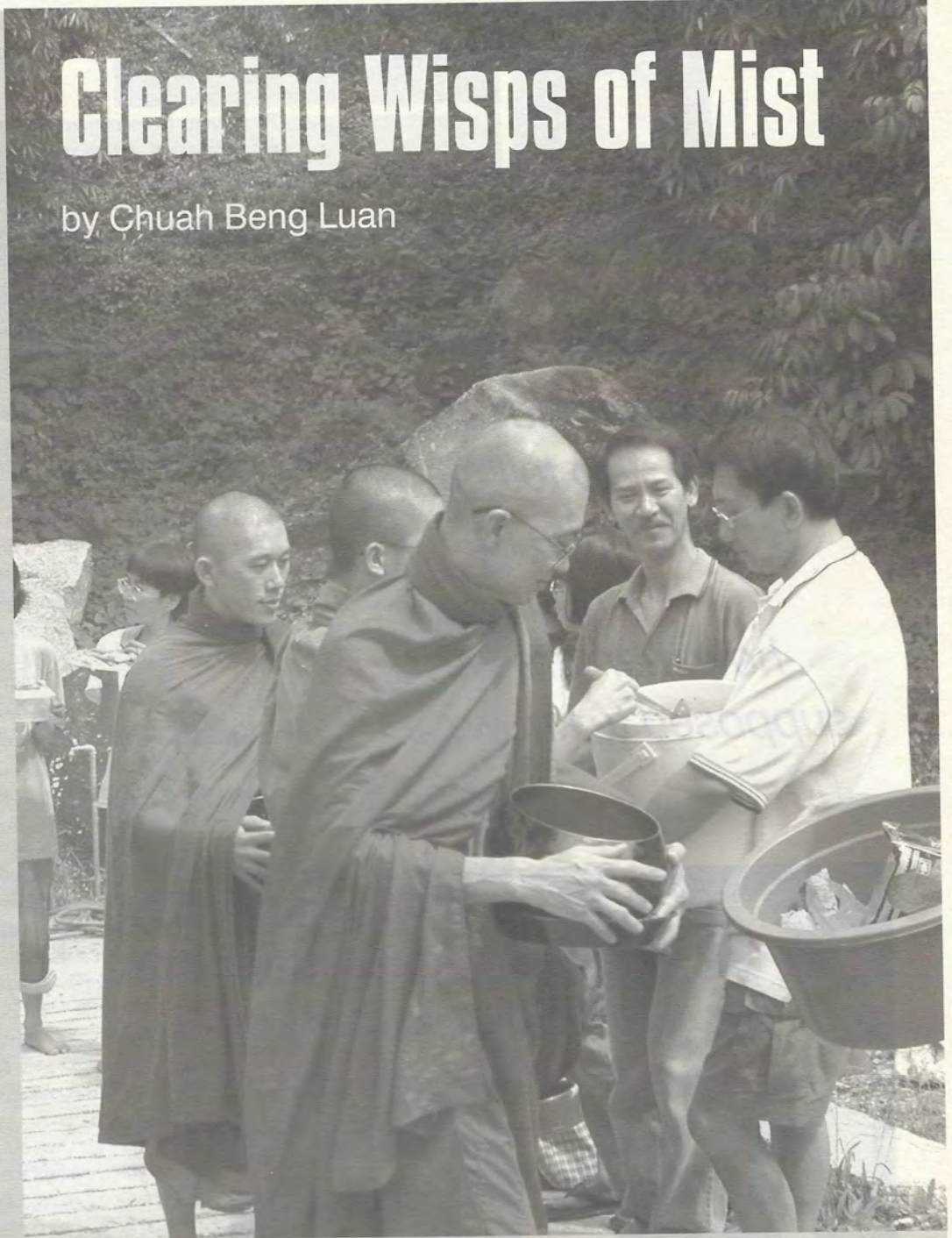
What about telling dawn? That's even more complicated, *far* more complicated. As a quick sure-fire guide, when you can begin to tell the difference between red and green using sunlight, you can be certain that dawn has passed.

That's a matter of fact. ☸☸

Ven. Kusala,
in a
discussion
with some
devotees,
clears some
misconceptions
about dana.

Clearing Wisps of Mist

by Chuah Beng Luan



Residents of Taiping are more familiar with the Mahayanese tradition of monks as opposed to the Theravadin tradition. This misty view of the Theravadin tradition is further compounded by some monks following their own 'unique' traditions, plying their pindapata rounds in and around the markets of Taiping. Recently a group of us had a very fruitful discussion with Ven. Kusala in connection with this subject.

CHUAN: Before Bhante started on pindapata rounds in Taiping, it was not a common sight for a monk on his alms round to accept only food. What was the general reaction of the people in these places when Bhante first started this practice?

BHANTE: Not everybody knows how to do dana especially the free thinkers and non-Buddhists. They feel that performing dana is meaningless so they are not interested in dana at all.

When I first started to go on pindapata in Taiping, people were not sure whether I wanted food or money. As it is my practice to refuse money and accept food only, gradually they learned to give me only food. People in Taiping are friendlier and the response here is even better than in some of the places in Penang even though Buddhism in the Peninsula started in Penang. Some of the donors are very generous. Even if I stood at their stalls every morning, they would still give me food which is more than enough for my consumption.

CHUAN: What is Bhante's main purpose of going on alms round in Taiping?

BHANTE: Nowadays in our much developed society, a lot of people isolate themselves. They are very selfish and not at all concerned about other people. Basically everyone has a kind heart; it just needs someone to awaken it and bring it out. If there is no one to arouse their kindness, more often than not people will become very selfish and stingy.

Once the management committee of a Buddhist organisation arranged for me to go on my alms round at a nearby coffee shop. I was quite relieved to know that one of its members owned a stall in that coffee shop and I thought there would be no problem to go on pindapata there. Alas, I was wrong! As soon as one of the stall owners saw me, he started to wave his hand frantically, giving me ample warning not to go near him! Worse still, another man who sells fried *koay teow* thought that my kappiya ordered fried *koay teow* for me. He had begun frying the *koay teow* when someone told him that it was for dana. The minute he heard that, he removed the *koay teow* from the kuali and exclaimed, "We do business here, not charity!" These people do not realise that when monks go on alms round, they are actually giving the public an opportunity to sow good seeds for a better future. Without the kindness and generosity in them being awakened, lay people will not be able to live a happy life.

CHUAN: Does Bhante accept whatever food that's offered?

BHANTE: Actually I accept only cooked food but in order to encourage more people to do dana, I sometimes accept uncooked food like raw vegetables especially when the person is in a hurry.



Ven Kusala

CHUAN: Recently there was an article in the Chinese newspaper saying that if a monk was still on pindapata after 11.00am then he was a bogus monk. Is that true?

BHANTE: Monks are allowed to eat until noon. Monks have to stop eating before noon, i.e. the time when the Muslims are having their noon prayer which occurs between 1.00pm-1.30pm so it is not wrong for a monk to be still on alms round after 11.00am.

CHUAN: When Bhante has accepted enough food for the day, does Bhante still continue to accept some more food?

BHANTE: By right I should stop accepting once I get enough food but as I want more people to have the chance to do dana, I continue to accept the offer. Not many monks go on pindapata. It would be ideal if more monks go on alms round so that more people have the chance to do dana. The rewards we get now are the result of the good deeds done in the past. If we want to have a happy life in future, we should be kind, generous and perform more dana. Dana is a virtue; it cuts off greed. Dana with good intention will bring us a lot of happiness and less *dukkha*. Dana can also help us to acquire *sila*, *samadhi* and *pañña*. When doing dana, the state of mind is very important. One should be joyful before the dana, i.e. during the preparation of food, during the offer and in the after thought.

CHUAN: What does Bhante do with the excess food?

BHANTE: As there is a kappiya around to recycle food, I will relinquish the excess food and let the kappiya send it to the needy.

CHUAN: Has Bhante ever encountered anyone who is antagonistic when Bhante goes on pindapata in Taiping?

BHANTE: Generally the people in Taiping are very friendly; but when I first started my alms round at a coffee shop, I did come across someone who was rather rude. Luckily there were other people there who were used to doing dana, so gradually his attitude improved. Perhaps he was hostile because he had heard of bogus monks before.

CHUAN: Has Bhante ever encountered a money-accepting monk in the same place for alms? If so,

what was the reaction of the other monk and that of the public?

BHANTE: I have never met one face to face. I usually try to avoid them. If I knew that there was a money-collecting monk nearby, I would go to another spot for pindapata. Actually only allowable requisites, especially food, should be put in the alms bowl; not money. One of my aims of going on pindapata is to educate the public not to offer money to monks.

TAN SUAN SOON: I think there should be wisdom when we perform dana. If we suspect that they are bogus monks should we then not offer them anything?

BHANTE: I would like to remind those who give money to a money-accepting monk that in the event he uses the money to do unwholesome deeds such as drug trafficking, the donor indirectly becomes a collaborator and thus has a share of the bad kamma too.

TIAN MENG: Can a monk collect money for the extension of a temple?

BHANTE: Monks cannot handle money. They can say, for example, "It is appropriate to build a library here." But the donation is collected by the temple committee, not the monks.

TAN GUAN SOON: Besides performing dana to the monks, what else should lay people do?

BHANTE: They should listen to dhamma talks, share the dhamma with others and encourage them to do good deeds like dana. The robe is a symbol of an arahant. If one performs dana hoping that he would be rewarded in terms of money, that is not quite correct. One would be rewarded with everything including longevity, beauty, happiness and strength if one performs good deeds such as dana, sharing of merits and rejoicing in others' good deeds. One should also keep precepts, meditate, give service as well as revere parents, monks and elders with the right understanding.

CHUAN: Thank you very much, Bhante, for a very enlightening discussion.

BHANTE: Sometimes the enthusiasm of a monk's supporters might cool down if the monk was absent from a particular place for a long time. If I left Taiping one day, lay people should continue to offer food to the SBS monks. After all, when one offers food to a monk, one should be mindful that one is offering food not to the particular monk in front of him but to the Sangha. SBS

Management Past and Present

● FROM PAGE ONE

were cooperative and gave me the support needed to lighten my burden. There was never a shortage of suggestions and ideas from them, although at times I wished that more action could have been taken to transform those ideas into reality.

My team, for all its cooperation and support, could not have brought SBS to its present status without the backup of our volunteer consultants, some of whose contributions had already been highlighted in previous issues of *Sāsanārakkha*. They had given unconditionally to the planning, design, construction, erosion control and landscaping of SBS. They had given their best, despite the constraints of their full-time jobs some distance away from SBS. The distance limited the time and energy they spent here. So we forgive them just as unconditionally if at times building plans were delayed. Such delays were, of course, one of the obstacles that we had to be patient with.

We also had to deal with some other obstacles. For example, in the first phase of construction, poor coordination on the part of the contractors resulted in many man-hours lost when workers sat idly waiting for building materials to arrive.

Another problem we faced was and still is the difficulty of getting full time workers to stay on the job at SBS. It's difficult getting people to stay in a place where entertainment, like TV, is totally absent. Volunteer workers are also not that easy to recruit but I'm grateful to the loyal band of diehards who have helped to keep SBS going from day to day.

We had tried to overcome whatever obstacles that came our way as best we could. Starting almost from scratch, we now hand over to the next Management Committee completed roads and drainage, seven kutis, an office cum library cum reception room for the Abbot with an adjoining car park area, Dhamma workers' quarters and a sima hall. The water treatment and collection plant from two natural spring sources now supplies water to all the buildings. An inspiring open air Buddha Shrine overlooks SBS. Landscaping of various areas is done and ongoing. Of special satisfaction to me, from an aesthetic point of view, is the sima hall with its special design and built with specially selected timber over a human-made pond.

I'm quite satisfied with the physical progress because I've achieved my main objective of putting the Sanctuary on a firm footing. I'm still in the Management Committee but the burden, I can say with relief, is now off my shoulders. My present concern is getting the administration streamlined, something which we did not concentrate on previously.



Ng Kian Chong:

Thanks to the Pro Tem Committee under Lee Lee Kim, we have no worries about funding. Many thanks also go to Goh Keat Soon for laying the foundation and handing over to me a 'baby' that's healthy and ready to take its first tottering steps. My job now is to nurture it and help it along the road to adulthood.

Of course, along the way we may need to do a bowel purge or two, some de-worming and perhaps even removing any gallstones that may form (For the uninitiated, this is an allegory à la Ayurveda—Ed). Some traditional strengthening tonics and herbs will also be administered from time to time. Traditional herbs can be bitter and difficult to swallow. As the Chinese idiom says, "Efficacious medicine is bitter to swallow". So I hope all concerned will bear with whatever bitter medicine that has to be swallowed. At SBS, we have strong faith in traditional ways (especially in areas pertaining to health and the Dhamma), but at the same time, we will take advantage of modern technology in its daily functioning.

Yes, we are taking steps to strengthen the administrative structure by streamlining its functions, and the coordination between depart-

ments. Besides retaining familiar faces, we have included new faces in the committee and expanded the administrative structure with hopes that new blood will inject more vitality.

On the physical front we will concentrate on putting up the administration building, Sangha Central Facilities, classroom and library. The durian orchard, however, is proving to be more of a liability than an asset although we had initial hopes of it serving as a source of income. That's a problem my committee will work on.

I do not see an easy or permanent solution to the problem of workforce—it will be an ongoing concern for us as it was for the previous committee and we will have to tackle it ad hoc.

My main objective is to make SBS a place conducive for the training of Malaysian monks. And in the not-too-distant future, I hope, it will also be a retreat centre for lay people. Certainly, there is no shortage of people waiting to come here for retreat, if and when we are ready. Our immediate concern now is to get suitable candidates to come in as postulants and monks. We have to really work on this area now that the physical structure is in place.

Overall, I see myself playing the role of a diplomat, making manoeuvres and overtures, so that everyone connected with SBS is happy, well and peaceful. SBS

The Way We Tick



Our new Administrative Manager gives you a peek at the day to day comings and goings in SBS.

by Tan Yoke Sim

Much has been written of the support given to SBS nationwide, in terms of finance, brain and brawn, but what of the day to day running of SBS?

Let's look at the Administration Sub-committee, headed by a member of the Management Committee with the lofty title of Administrative Manager. The Manager is ably supported by a team of very capable section heads. Under this sub-committee's wing are general administration, dana, housekeeping, transport and health.

At the time of writing SBS has a staff of five, namely the Interim General Administrator, Field Assistant, Administrative Assistant and two general workers. Considering the size of SBS, we are really having only a skeleton staff. In other words, all have double or multiple roles to play at one time or another and they all do so without much of a murmur.



To give you an idea, let's look at the Field Assistant, **Ling Ting Hook**, who is stationed at the Site Office. Besides managing the site, he also has to stand in as General Administrator (the post will be filled only at the end of June) in his absence. This means he will also have to be the telephone operator, 'tourist guide' to drop-in visitors, PR man, and kappiya when the need arises. Doesn't look like an 8-hour job, does it?

Each morning, rain or shine, around 7.30am or so from Monday to Saturday, if you happen to be around the Great Pavilion of the Hokkien Cemetery, you will see a group of cheerful men and women milling around, busy laying out food. No, they are not having a picnic breakfast! These cheerful, young and the not-so-young men and women come from all walks of life. They have taken upon themselves the responsibility of looking after the physical well-being of the SBS monastics. Headed by **Ooi Bee Bee**, they have organised a rota to share in this very meritorious dana.



Judging by the spread, one can be forgiven the thought that this has to be the best buffet in Taiping!

As you know, a number of buildings have come up in SBS—a sima hall,

kutis, an office, and visitor facilities. Except for occupied kutis which the monks look after, all need to be dusted, swept, mopped, and scrubbed fairly regularly. This is where **Mrs. Koay** and her team of volunteers come into the picture. Armed with mops and all manner of cleaning implements, these ladies don their gloves and cheerfully set to work without much ado every



Saturday. How not to feel humbled by such generous volunteerism?

Walking up SBS is undoubtedly good exercise provided one is able-bodied, and not in a hurry. There are times though when this is not possible. This is where **Lim Poh Eng** and his team of drivers come to the rescue. When the occasion



arises, as on Wesak and Kathina, Poh Eng will muster his fleet of vehicles to provide the much-welcomed transport up and down the hill for the throngs of devotees who come up to SBS. At other times you can see Poh Eng peering underneath the bonnets of SBS's two 4WDs for which welfare he is responsible.

Be it a band aid or a visit to the doctor, **Tong Kok Chan**, a pharmacist by profession, comes to the rescue. He has organised a panel of medical practitioners to look after the monastics and SBS staff. Furthermore, he takes time off his busy business to check that the first aid boxes are stocked with the basic items.

SBS is indeed very fortunate to have such generous and helpful supporters at its doorstep. Without them SBS would be like 'a bird flying on one wing'. SBS



Trudging Along the long road to development

As the newly appointed Development Manager responsible for the physical development on SBS, may I firstly express my appreciation to TIMS General Committee for giving me this opportunity to serve.

My predecessors who have guided development before me have done a great job and this makes future development a lot easier. They have overcome obstacles in their way and it is now my responsibility to make sure the 'figures stay in shape' during my tenure on the job!

Let us now trudge along the long road of development from where we stopped in the January issue of *Sasanarakkha*. In this past half year we concentrated mainly on putting the finishing touches to Phase 2 development as well as looked into certain safety aspects.

Erosion control, improvement on the road system, lightning protection, water quality, and road safety have been our primary focus. An open air Buddha Shrine with its open deck takes pride of place in our achievement these past five months.

EROSION CONTROL

One of the main principles guiding physical development in SBS is conservation of the natural environment. But in any building project there has to be excavations and the levelling of uneven terrain. This has aggravated existing problems of soil erosion and slope failure. So, like eating and sleeping, erosion control among the hilly terrain of SBS is an ongoing chore.



Wai Seng Moh
Development Manager 1



Landslide

Heavy rainfall after several weeks of dry weather caused a minor landslide on the slope in front of the existing site office. The slope had previously been trimmed, patched and planted with signal grass that had grown to more than a foot long. To prevent further erosion, the damaged slope was covered with plastic sheets for several weeks until we finally got a backhoe tractor driver willing to work on the treacherous terrain of SBS. The slope was eventually trimmed further, sacrificing a durian tree growing on it, and planted with signal grass seeds using the terra-control method.

Trimming of Slopes

Since we got the only backhoe in Taiping willing to work in SBS, we made full use of the opportunity to trim the neighbour's slopes along our approach road, Jalan Sasanarakkha. Mr. KL Khor had repeatedly urged us to undertake the environmental responsibility of extending erosion control to the neighbour's land as well, since our approach road passes through it.

Signal Grass

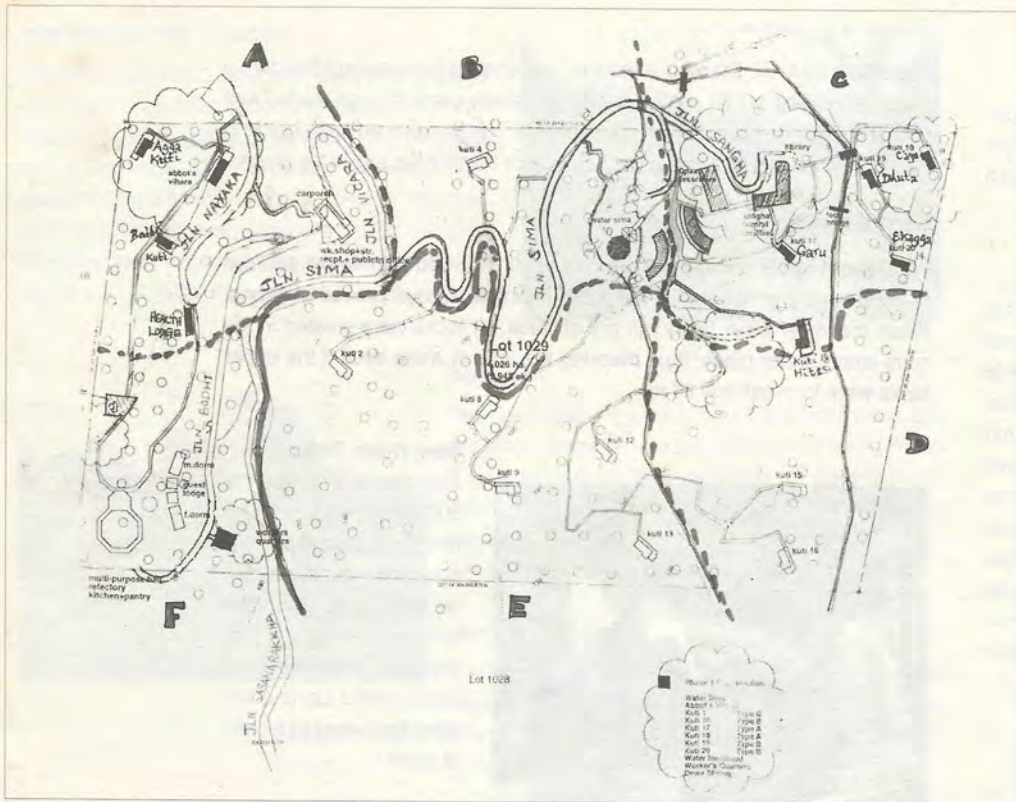
'Kueh Kak' Seng and his team followed up the operation by mud-slinging signal grass seeds onto the trimmed slopes, the height of which varied between 2-8 metres, and the length stretching for about 150 metres.

Turfing

Instead of buying lorry-loads of turf, we have been tapping the large expanse of mixed cowgrass within our premises to turf exposed areas on steep slopes, especially along newly constructed reinforced-concrete (r.c.) steps.

Drainage

After a complete facelift of the slope in front of the site office we are now ready to improve the earth drain at its foot with r.c. drains and sumps.



Naming of Roads

The Malaysian Buddhist Identity that SBS is trying to forge is again reflected in the following names of the major roads on its premises:

- **Jalan Sasarakkha:** from main intersection leading downwards to the lever gate at the foothill
- **Jalan Bodhi:** from main intersection leading to future Multi-purpose Hall.
- **Jalan Vicara** ("administration/management"): the road looping the future Admin. Block
- **Jalan Nayaka** ("leader"): from future Admin. Block going up to abbot's office
- **Jalan Sima:** from main intersection leading down to the Sima
- **Jalan Sangha:** from cempedak junction of Jalan Sima to White House (site for future sangha library, publishing & meeting room and classroom).

ROAD SYSTEM

Drainage and erosion control are primary considerations in the planning of the SBS road system because the concrete surface of roads and paths becomes a water course during torrential rain. This has been strictly adhered to in our designs.

Footpaths and Steps

To facilitate access to the kutis and other buildings a series of footpaths and steps were built. This included a flight of r.c. steps-cum-cascade drain from the Abbot's Office to the site office.

Entrance Gate

At long last, we erected our main entrance gate with an automatic system. Authorised SBS personnel no longer have to stop their vehicles precariously on a steep slope in order to get down to unlock and open the gate. Now it's just a beep away, within the convenience of one's vehicle.

'Kueh Kak' Leong initiated the entrance pillar project to carve the Chinese characters of SBS on a handsome piece of weathered log (probably *chengal mas*) measuring about 4.5 metres high with an average diameter of 450mm. We managed to request local-born Ven. Chi Chern of the Taiping Buddhist Society, a renowned master of Chinese calligraphy, to write the characters and Ah Leong's father-in-law, Tan Son Lai, to carve and gild them in gold.

And that's not all. Ah Leong is committed to pave the surrounding area with granite slabs donated by former Development Manager Ooi Eng Huat, as well as to manufacture mock rock slabs with a natural finish to dress the entrance walls.

Widening Jalan Sasarakkha

As the entrance gate is sited at a relatively steep stretch of Jalan Sasarakkha, we took the opportunity to widen the road just before it by cutting into the neighbour's land while the backhoe was trimming the slope. Fortunately, no durian trees were planted on that steep vacant portion of land. The existing drain will go underground when an r.c. slab is constructed over the widened area, enabling vehicles to wait for the gate to be opened, or to U-turn if entry is denied.



Road Signs

The completion of the entrance gate would require the putting up of road signs to forewarn unauthorised vehicles of the danger of stopping at a steep incline facing a locked gate.

Upgrading of Access Road

Drivers of lorries, 4WDs and other vehicles have long complained about that steep, treacherous stretch of dirt road between TNB spun poles #26 and #31. We tried to rectify the situation several times with gravel and soil, and finally with premix waste. Although the tar scrapings held the gravel together better than red soil, the MC decided that in the end it would be better to upgrade the road with reinforced concrete surface and proper drains. Now that the entry of unauthorised vehicles can be controlled with the entrance gate in operation, the reconstruction of the road is in progress.

ELECTRICITY AND TELECOMMUNICATION

Electrical Power supply and telecommunications have been in operation since May 2001. However, attacks from the scary thunderstorms over SBS have not ceased. They have taken their toll on the following equipment:

- 1 notebook adapter
- 2 circuit breakers (ELCBs)
- 1 cordless phone
- 1 refrigerator
- 1 washing machine
- 1 automatic gate fuse
- 1 telephone line surge arrester
- 1 intercom line

Lightning Protection

Lightning strikes not only cost money for repairs and replacements; they also cause inconvenience. In our effort to solve this problem, we found out that the solution lay greatly on good earth grounding. SBS being sited on a rocky hill, the resistance of the ground here prevents electrical surges, such as those caused by lightning, to be diverted to the ground. Instead, they hit the electrical appliances.

After numerous tests, we found the better readings at the lowest area of SBS. A series of copper rods were driven into the ground and connected to one another. For added protection, earth grounding was extended to all available septic tanks as well. The earthing system comprises a network of stay wires, copper strips and earth wires connected to all buildings and electrical earth points.

Not only was equipment damaged, we also found that our circuit breakers tripped very frequently. That puzzled us for a long time. Sometimes, even when only faint thunder could be heard, some of our circuit breakers would trip. This

was solved by Ir. BL Tan, who introduced a special lightning surge protector by Hager. According to him, surges do not necessarily come through the live wire only. They can also come through the earth wire. The protector works by blocking surges from the ground besides diverting surges from the live wire to the ground.

WATER SUPPLY

We thought rather smugly that we had been endowed with ample sources of water supply, until watering the plants during a dry spell proved us wrong. When the lower water tanks ran dry of water, air locks were created in the semi-empty water pipes; thus blocking the flow of water even if the upper tanks were to eventually fill up.



New Water Tank

The installation of an extra 600-gallon poly-tank on the hillslope above Agga Kuti alleviated the problem. But we still had to use water sparingly during a recent dry spell, when the lower spring dried up and the other two were just trickles of water

Sand Filter

Although the highest spring provided an additional source of water supply, it was not as clean as the middle spring. When Michael Woo came to inspect the springs in February 2002, he marvelled at the purity of the middle spring water collected in the r.c. tanks designed by him, which had not been cleaned for over 6 months. In contrast, the water collected from the highest spring was rather murky, especially after heavy rain. This prompted him to propose the installation of a sand filter to alleviate the problem. On 12 March 2002, the filter was installed, sponsored by Michael and friends.

FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

After putting the finishing touches to the buildings under Phase 2 development, we continued with a few piece-meal projects that prevailing circumstances brought to our attention.



Dhamma Workers' Quarters

In early February 2002, the Dhamma Workers' Quarters was finally completed although it had been earlier occupied by yogis during SBS's first meditation retreat held in December 2001. Since then more and more volunteer Dhamma workers have come to offer their services to the sanctuary. However, it's for men only. When the guest lodge for ladies is eventually built, we can be sure of more volunteer workers!



New Kutis

Two new kutis, one sited behind the Abbot's office and the other nearby the sima pond, were built under Phase 2 development. The future occupants of these two kutis would have to be special people with special kamma because they were constructed of special hardwood timber sent all the way from Sarawak.

Naming of Kutis

The SBSMC gave its Spiritual Director the honour of naming the kutis in Pali. The names were chosen so that

they can be easily remembered by the man in the street; if not the Pali name, then at least the A, B, C:

- Agga Kuti
- Bodhi Kuti
- Caga Kuti
- Dhuta Kuti
- Ekagga Kuti
- Garu Kuti
- Hitesi Kuti

Carpark Area at Jalan Vicara

Trimming of the eroded slope in front of the site office produced much excess soil that had to be dumped in a convenient place nearby. The disused compost pit round the corner was just the ideal location. Our dream carpark for the Kembara and Land Rover materialised!



Bridge

Most of the Phase 1 kutis were built at the southeastern slopes of SBS, where a gurgling brook separates it from the rest of the sanctuary. During construction, a makeshift bridge of plywood and bakau trunks was used. Now we have a handsome, steel-frame wooden bridge with a long bench for the weary to sit on and let the spring waters sweep away troubling thoughts.

Open-deck at Buddha Shrine

Wesak Eve 2002 at SBS would not have been so glorious if the open-deck facing the Buddha image had not been completed in the nick of time.

Measuring over 9 metres by 7.6 metres and suspended over a footpath below, it seated over 100 people that night. A special design feature is provision made for the installation of two 15' x 20' canopies to keep out the sun and rain when required.



Phase 3 Development

Initial plans to continue with Phase 3 development after the completion of Phase 2 were unexpectedly shelved because of several reasons:

- Tender documents were not complete.
- Preliminary quotation given by the Phase 2 contractor was unacceptably high
- The Sangha wanted to have more time, peace and quietude for monk activities during the Rains retreat.

So Phase 3 development comprising Sangha Central Facilities, Library, Classroom, Publication and Meeting Rooms and Administrative Building can begin only after the vassa. SBS



Tan Buck Soon, SBS Consultant Structural Engineer, first met Ven. Aggacitta in 1999 when the latter was working on his book, 'Dying to Live'. SBS was then still in the initial stages of conceptualisation but the former was already very supportive of the idea.

He patiently copes with the many frequent amendments to his drawings and plans. Furthermore, whenever structural problems crop up and have to be solved without delay he readily responds to urgent telephone calls, no matter where he is; be it in the office, on the road, at home or attending a function somewhere. He also finds time to make on-site visits when necessary.

Tan Buck Soon has been a Buddhist since his early teens, when he learned about the teachings of the Buddha from the Wat Pin Bang Onn Sunday School in Penang. An engineering graduate from University Malaya and an active Buddhist, he gives dhamma talks regularly at universities, colleges and other Buddhist organisations.

He currently heads the Bandar Utama Buddhist Society in his housing estate in Petaling Jaya. The society was founded a year and a half ago when Buck Soon got together with a few friends and formed it at the request of the Bandar Utama Resident Association to cater to the spiritual needs of the residents living in Bandar Utama and its vicinity. It offers Sunday Dhamma classes for children and teens, Dhamma talks for adults, chanting and meditation lessons at rented premises. Response to the activities of the society has been very encouraging and membership of the society jumped from 10 to 310 within a year and a half, reflecting the growing interest in Buddhism. "People come to seek spiritual fulfilment. They find the teachings of the Buddha very useful to them," he says.

For the benefit of posterity, the society is currently applying for a piece of land from the Government to build an all-purpose centre.

Buck Soon has his own consulting engineering firm and is married with three children. He is grateful to Bhante Aggacitta for giving him the opportunity to contribute his professional services to SBS. SBS

JOY IN SERVING

by Doreen Lim

Tan Ban Leong, one of our landscape artists, tells you about some of his creations.



When was the first time you set foot on SBS soil?

It was about 2 years ago when the decision was made to purchase the land. Mr Goh Keat Soon brought me here.

How long have you been into landscaping?

It first started as a hobby about 10 years ago when a group of friends and I were very interested in this art. Later on, we decided to pool our skills and resources together to start a small landscaping business which we attended to in our spare time. We created statues of lions, dragons, etc. for temples. Over time, we learnt the ropes through trial and error. However, as we had our own jobs and were not prepared to go full-time into it, this part-time business partnership was dissolved. I do it not for money alone. I feel it is more important to be able to deliver a beautiful, satisfactory piece of work.

Which was your first landscaping assignment in SBS?

It is the area around the abbot's office. As it is a small area, it took only a few days to complete, with the assistance of some visiting university students.

I heard you are working on a much bigger project now. What is it?

It's the area around the stream that flows into the sima pond. There will be a waterfall at the spot where the water leaves the culvert hole. I plan to put a stone across the stream to create a second waterfall. I must admit that work progress is slow, and the construction is carried out in small stages.

After completing one stage, I'll wait for renewed inspiration before going onto the next one. It has been nearly one year since I started and it is now 70% completed. We have not decided where to locate the pump. Fortunately, some friends come to help out regularly. A supportive devotee, Lim Poh Teik, donated RM2,000 for purchasing raw materials.

I also want to beautify the retaining wall of the sima pond. I've an idea of what to do but do not have the time to carry it out yet. If I am able to work on it continuously, it will take only 3 months. Actually, many people want to help but very few come forward to help.

Did you see the entrance pillar at the main gate of SBS?

That is another original creation! Where did you get the idea from?

Ven. Aggacitta likes nature and objects that blend in with it. When he agreed to my proposal to erect a pillar to mark the main entrance, I started looking for something suitable and found a piece of dirty looking *chengal mas* (a local hardwood) abandoned in the yard of a sawmill. The owner donated it to SBS when he heard about the project. With the help of my brothers and a tractor, the 15-ft long log was dragged and loaded onto a lorry and transported to my uncle, 'Kueh Kak' Seng's house.

There, my elderly father-in-law carved the logo and the name of SBS in Chinese on it. Then the log was treated with one layer of diesel and black oil to make it more lasting. That's how we get the dark colour. Don't you think the gold lettering and logo stand out well against the dark background?

I hear you are creating something for the wall adjoining the main gate. What is it?

When the contractor proposed using ceramic tiles for the wall, I thought, "Why not create a variety of mock rock slabs with a natural finish?" I've got to show a sample to Ven. Aggacitta who has given the green light. I'll be making a lot of them at home and will piece them together on the wall. It is quite a slow process. These thin pieces will have a natural aesthetic look in a dark red earth colour. It will cost very much less than the commercial ones.

As a family man, where do you find time to spend in SBS?

Interest, responsibility, good time management and a commitment to help with Buddha sasana work coupled with the sheer joy of being able to contribute are my motivating forces. I am interested in creating for SBS because I am given a free hand at it. It's easy to work without a deadline. As I said, I also need inspiration. By the way, I am a hawker by night. I come from a family of *kueh kak* hawkers (maternal side). Remember my uncle, 'Kueh Kak' Seng, the SBS-trained expert on the planting



of signal grass? We are likened to the MacDonald chain of outlets. If you ask for recommendation to a *kueh kak* stall in Taiping, the chances of being directed to one of our family members are very high.

Can you tell us something of your involvement in Buddhism?

When I was small, I used to go to a Mahayanist temple. There I learned chanting and listened to dhamma talks. I stopped for a while, perhaps because the interest just waned. Not long after that I renewed my interest in Buddhism again and that has led me to SBS.

Many thoughts started running through my mind as I walked back to the site office of SBS. Here is a man who is able to give so much of his time in spite of having a growing family and a business to look after. He can still find the time to attend to two projects in SBS simultaneously, committed and dedicated to both. I too have the same 24 hours in a day. There is no excuse for me, is there? SBS

An Interview with SBS's First Trainee Monk

• FROM PAGE SEVEN

Then a number of them admitted that they have no interest in learning the Vinaya in detail. Quite a few believe that it is adequate to just follow the norm of whichever monastic community they are in.

Another reason is that some monks prefer to move from place to place. This was quite a common practice during the Buddha's time. However, based on the rules, I think it was a case of students following the teacher, or travelling in search of a qualified teacher. Another possible situation is that the monk has fulfilled the minimum prerequisites of independence and is therefore "licensed" to go on his own. It's somewhat sad to see that many Malaysian monks seem to travel all over on their own even when they have yet to qualify. I think that's rather detrimental to the strength of the Sangha in Malaysia.

I see. Actually I was expecting more practical reasons, like not being able to adapt physically to the lifestyle here.

Well there are some monks who shy away from SBS because of the expectation here to practise some dhutangas (ascetic practices). I must admit that I too felt somewhat intimidated by it as it *did* sound tough. However, after observing the practice for some time, they don't seem *that* difficult after all. Obviously, it was a case of false perception.

Practising dhutanga has its advantages and is much encouraged here, but it is not insisted upon without due consideration for individual capacity. If a monk has a certain health problem that makes

a certain practice unsuitable, he is free to set it aside until such a time when he has gained back his health. We don't torture monks here.

Another thing is the demand on fitness. I remember a visiting monk candidly telling me that he couldn't manage the daily hike for pindapata. I must say that it was certainly quite demanding earlier on. But since we shifted our pindapata venue to the Hokkien cemetery and started going down through a shortcut, it's easier now. Going down takes less than half an hour, and coming up about 45 minutes. It shouldn't be too difficult for a person of average fitness. Besides, we usually make some adjustments for monks who are not used to it.

Has there been any complaint about the overall atmosphere at SBS?

Yes. Some say this place is somewhat noisy because of the ongoing construction works. A monastic residence should of course be ideally quiet, but I suppose it's something we have to live with for the time being. Actually, one tends to get used to the noise after a while. Besides, the noise is not there all the time. It's rather peaceful off working hours.

All these reasons, which Bhante has just mentioned, appear to be quite lame on the surface. I think with such a qualified teacher as Bhante Aggacitta here, these reasons shouldn't deter them from coming; don't you think so?

I agree but I don't think my opinion would make any difference here. One reason I've heard quite recently was Bhante Aggacitta was too busy with worldly duties, such as supervising the construction and attending to administrative matters.

Actually, despite having to do all those things he still finds time to teach. We've been having classes almost every day.

Bhante, what are the areas that you would recommend looking into to boost the intake of trainee monks and postulants at SBS?

I've given quite some thoughts to this issue. It's an important issue for me, because if no other monks were to be trained here other than me, I can be accused of being a very expensive monk to train.

I'm not sure what the committee can or should do, but for us monks, there seems to be just one proper thing to do: be good monks. To me, that seems to be the only way to attract good monks here.

What's your advice to our young Malaysian monks and those potential recruits out there?

I suggest that they choose their preceptors and mentors well. It's the most important thing for them to do. Be discerning in evaluating whether such-and-such a monk has the qualifications to be a mentor. Does he behave well in accordance with the Dhamma-vinaya? Is he capable of teaching the Dhamma-vinaya? Bear in mind that it takes a discerning mind and a long period of observation to be certain of a person's true character.

As the Buddha had made quite clear, the whole of this holy life depends on right association. So, be a bit fussy. Choose carefully.

If any of them thinks of coming here, I suggest that he doesn't listen to what other people say about this place—good or bad. Just come and see it for yourself. SBS



Things have been unfolding at a quick pace since the idea of setting up a local monk-training centre crystallised. We'd like to share with you the beautiful and exciting process of our development and offer you the opportunity to participate in our inspired, collective efforts.

2 Jan Our Sabah representative, Eng Kwan Hai, comes for a visit and informs that he has to relinquish his post as he is leaving Sabah. He recommends Soh Poh Soon, a practising Buddhist, to take his place.

4 Jan At Buddhist Wisdom Centre, PJ, Ven. Aggacitta and SBSMC members Ng Kian Chong, Eng Lai Hiang and How Eng Keong interview Cheong Thoong Leong who is interested in the post of General Administrator for SBS. A member of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants, he is currently working in SCS Computer Systems Sdn Bhd. He is the treasurer of the Kwan Yin Zhan Lin Zen Centre in Johore and is interested in deepening his spiritual practice.

6 Jan The Management Committee holds its monthly meeting today, for the first time, in the Abbot's Office instead of in TIMS.

18 Jan A Bodhi tree donated by BC Lim in Cheras is brought up to SBS today. The used furniture donated by SJBA has also arrived in Taiping. The transportation from SJBA is sponsored by Mega Logistic Holding Bhd, of which the Executive Director is Lim Hee Chay, our Selangor representative.

19 Jan Ms. Chen and her gardening team loosen the soil at the site for an organic vegetable and herb garden and make initial preparations for vegetable plots.

27 Jan Five carloads of members of the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia Youth Section are here for a visit. They join the Sunday dana in TIMS and offer requisites to the monks.



28 Jan The bridge to the lower kutis is completed.

31 Jan It is the last day of work for our site supervisor, Lim Eng Keat, who has served us well during the period of his tenure. We wish him well.

4 Feb Ven. Kusala, who spent last year's vassa in SBS, arrives in TIMS. He is invited by the SBS Management Committee to stay as a visiting monk at Khemarama.

7 Feb We welcome Ven. Kusala as he moves into Khemarama, Ven. Aggacitta's former residence, on a hill opposite SBS.

The Dhamma Workers' Quarters is now completed; Ah Huat, our Dhamma worker, moves into his new home.

8 Feb Mr. Chan Kong Weng and his surveyor team begin marking the boundaries of 2 lots adjacent to SBS within which our upper and middle spring sources are probably located. It is in our interest to acquire those 2 lots for security and environmental reasons.



9 Feb Leong Weng Choy, SBS representative for Pahang, together with his wife and two sons, is here on an impromptu visit.

Gifts from Penang arrive in SBS—a new Diethlem chair for the Abbot's Office donated by Allan Khoo and

friends, compiled Journals of the Pali Text Society and the PTS Vinaya Pitaka donated by our library patron, Mr. See Chim Han, and friends.

13 Feb Dr. Soo, who is back in Taiping for the Chinese New Year, finds the time to inspect the leakage at the sima pond and to look at the newly completed bridge and 2 other new kutis under construction. He also inspects and discusses with Ven. Aggacitta the foundations for the proposed entrance gate to SBS, administrative complex and public toilets.

15 Feb Ven. Kumara's father, Mr. Liew Hee Nam, and family visit SBS. They bring with them a new digital camera and accessories donated by Ah San of Balik Pulau.

Dr. Soo and Tan Buck Soon, SBS consultant structural engineer, survey the sites for the proposed administrative complex and the public toilets. It is decided that priority of construction be given to the Sangha Central Facilities, classroom and library.

17 Feb The Management Committee holds its monthly meeting for the 11th session.

23-24 Feb Chong Foo Boon, a marketing officer of a development company, comes to stay for the weekend and help around. Michael Woo and his friends come to stay for the night, to discuss work problems in SBS. They inspect the water source and are happy with the clarity of the water supply from the middle spring.

Lee Siew Chee, our Perak state representative, brings some visitors. They are Ven. Dikpal of Calcutta, and Mr. & Mrs. Fong of Ipoh. Mr. Ong is the Ipoh bureau chief of *The Star*.

Tan Guan Soon arrives from Kuching in response to our need for a temporary general administrator while we source for a suitable one to fill the post.

Members of TIMS spend the morning digging for clay on a piece of land in Air Kuning belonging to Toh Chai Quan, a local housing developer.

6 Mar The bags of clay that were mined last week are transported up to SBS. There is protest! The 'miners' have filled too much clay into each bag as a result of which it is very difficult to lift up the bags onto the 4WD.

8 Mar A new 600 gallon water tank is installed on the slope above the abbot's kuti.

9 Mar Kee Swee Ann and Ng Kian Chong come for a site inspection. They also sign the contract for Phase 2 construction with Tong Hup Engineering.



10 Mar Members of TIMS are again hard at work digging for clay, as a total of 300 bags are needed. Lim Poh Eng, our transport manager, has another round of backbreaking labour of loading the bags



Happily Clay Mining

by Lim Lay Hoon

For many of us who are actively involved in voluntary service work at SBS, life nowadays is like a box of chocolates. The experiences that we have the chance to savour are often delightfully sweet. Recently we were treated to a taste of clay mining.

After the Kathina 2001 ceremony, it was discovered that the SBS sima pond was leaking. Water was seeping through cracks in the pond. Several options were recommended by Dr. Soo Kian Sin, the consultant geotechnical engineer of SBS, to rectify the problem. After careful consideration, the more economical method of using fine clay to plaster the whole pond was adopted. According to Dr. Soo, the water pressure would force the clay to plug the holes in the pond. Ng Kian Chong, the Chairperson of SBS, found a local housing developer, Toh Chai Quan, to sponsor the clay from his land bank in the outskirts of Taiping. The Programmes Department was then

assigned the task of getting volunteers to pack the clay into 300 sugar bags.

On the Sunday morning of February 24, 2002, after *pindapata* by the SBS monks, 22 volunteers set about this unusual assignment of mining for clay. The land bank area was vast so the volunteers organised themselves into small work groups and spread themselves out to different sections to dig the clay. One group comprised members of three different families, another group was made up of the 'iron ladies' of TIMS, the third was a group of young men, and the TIMS youths made up the fourth group. The family group and the young men worked quietly and diligently. The women chatted away happily while working, unreservedly expressing their joy and delight at the novel experience. One of them even burst into the tune of a song. Boisterous laughter from the youths interrupted the women's chatter. Clearly the youths were having fun playing with the clay in the process of working. They threw 'clay balls' and made claymen from the fine silky smooth and brownish orange clay that looked temptingly like rich, creamy ice cream. The warmth and joy that embraced us that morning was an unforgettable experience.

By 11am with the sun almost overhead, it was too hot to continue work. We ended the day's job with a collection of 71 bags of clay.

On March 10, we made our second trip to the land bank to collect more clay. Our friends from the Taiping Buddhist Society and Wat Bodhi Langka Ram joined us. This time around we attracted the attention of passersby. One curious onlooker, an elderly man, even asked what we were doing. In jest, someone replied that we were digging for gold. Half-believing what he heard, the man came back twice to observe us work! Our second round of collection was more bountiful—179 bags! This was partly because we were already more skilful. Also, it had not rained for a few days so the clay was quite dry. Having been deposited through the process of sedimentation, the clay was literally like layered cake. We could just peel the layers off easily. Some of the layers were so thick that two pairs of hands were needed to lift the clay chunks.

Still short of the targeted 300 bags, we went back for a final harvest on 15 March. Unfortunately, it had rained the previous night so the land bank was flooded. We stood in almost knee-deep muddy water and had to bend to dig the clay with our hands, looking like padi planters. As we could not place the sugar bags in the water near us, we formed a human chain to pass the clay to be put into the bags which were positioned on higher, dry ground. By the end of the day, some of us were quite a sight, looking as brownish orange as the laterite clay.

Well, as the saying goes "Life is not made of big things done in a big way. Instead it is really the little things done in a big way that makes for heroes." The undaunted heroes of SBS loyally and with a big heart, took up the challenge of a laborious job yet again—clay mining—and in the process have found untold joy. We hope that the little we have done will very soon help to rectify the pond seepage problem so that the sima pavilion could sit gracefully once again on its throne of water. SBS

of waterlogged clay onto the 4WD and transporting them up to SBS.

Ven. Virajo of the United States and Ven. Dhammajoti of Singapore are here as visiting monks. Another member of the Sangha, Ven. Subhadda of Brickfields, arrives at night after giving a Dhamma talk at TIMS.

12 Mar A sand filter is installed under the abbot's kuti.

13 Mar Ah Leong, who has been responsible for much of the landscaping work around the sima area, starts work laying granite slabs on the short cut from Jalan Sima to the sima pavillion.

Teresa Jong, who sponsored the timber for our sima pavilion, comes for a visit.

Ajahn Vajiro of England comes in the evening for a night's stay.



16 Mar The clay dug up and filled into bags a week ago is transported up with the help of our IBDA friends from Ipoh. It is another backbreaking task, and it looks as though that this is not the end, as more clay is still needed.

17 Mar The Management Committee holds its 12th monthly meeting—the last one for this outgoing committee.

19 Mar It is Ah Huat's last day at work as SBS's full-time Dhamma worker. He has served SBS well and we wish him well, too.

21 Mar Lim Chin Kheng, Cheng Jin Hooi and Yeoh Kar Kheng volunteer their services. They sweep

the roads as well as transport pebbles and granite slabs. They also begin paving the path alongside the Abbot's Office under Ah Leong's supervision.

Tong Hup Engineering surveys the entrance gate site in preparation for the installation of the gate.

22 Mar The new photo printer, an Epson Photo Stylus 895, donated by Ah San of Balik Pulau, arrives in the office at TIMS.

23 Mar The paving work on the path beside the Abbot's Office is finished and our three volunteers go home. Sadhu for a job well done. Mah Tuck Cheong, back home for the weekend from Kuala Lumpur, helps out with the paving work. He does some gardening and paints some driftwood in readiness for their use in landscaping.

Mr. and Mrs. Khoo Seong Liang of Tapak Semaian Perwira in OUG, Kuala Lumpur, come for a visit and offer some practical suggestions for landscaping.



24 Mar TIMS holds its General Meeting and a new General Committee is elected. This is followed by the appointment of new executive members for SBS Management Committee.

25 Mar Ling Ting Hook from Ipoh, who has been volunteering his services in SBS together with his IBDA friends, is here again as Assistant General Administrator.

28 Mar The Kembara donated by supporters in Singapore arrives.



1 Apr Work starts on the open deck for the Buddha Shrine as workers peg out the area. Ajahn Javana of the Bukit Kecil Meditation Centre in Kelantan comes for a visit accompanied by several devotees.

3 Apr Ven. Vivekananda and Samanera Viveka-bhirata arrive to stay as visiting monks.

5 Apr Obhasa Tee arrives to offer his services according to his capability.

6 Apr Jin Hooi, Chin Kheng and 14 other students from Taiping are here helping out as volunteers for the day.

7 Apr Ven. Mahanyano, who has been here since the vassa of 2001, leaves for Penang in preparation to go to Thailand for an indefinite stay there.

8 Apr Nine members of the Buddha Dhamma Sangha Group of Johor Bahru led by Bro. Sim are here for a visit. They spend the day exploring SBS and listened to a Dhamma talk by Ven. Aggacitta on "Life After Death".

9 Apr There is a thunderstorm in the mid-afternoon and lightning strikes the Abbot's Office, causing minor explosions in the main fuse box and puts a surge arrestor out of use. The storm also causes a small landslide on a slope near the site office.

12 Apr Dr Soo Kian Sin is here on another site visit. He inspects the extension deck of the Buddha Shrine as well as the leakage in the sima pond.

13 Apr A lorry load of plants donated by the owners of Tapak Semaian Perwira, Mr. and Mrs. Khoo Seong Liang of OUG, arrives.

14 Apr A group of 14 youths of the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia Youth Section (Dhammaduta) are here on a visit and offer their services for half a day. They join Taiping devotees for pindapata after their gotong-royong session.



The new Management Committee holds its first meeting, which lasts from 2.30pm till 10.30pm. Changes are made to the management structure.

Teo Chee Kian arrives from KL for a week's stay as a volunteer worker.

18 Apr Ten 4-foot stepladders sponsored by Alinco Audio Sdn. Berhad of Petaling Jaya arrive. They are to be placed at each building in SBS.

21 Apr A group of local volunteers from Pokok Assam and Aulong come up to help out at the organic farm site.

Young Volunteers at SBS

by Wong Mun Yee

Taiping, here we come! Some of us had that 'holiday feel' when we gathered at the Brickfields Buddhist Maha Vihara, Kuala Lumpur, on Saturday, 13 April 2002 at around 2pm. We were originally eighteen strong but then some were unwell while others had last-minute assignments to complete, so only fourteen of us set off in 3 cars at around 3pm. It was a scenic drive to Taiping along the North-South highway. We saw some beautiful waterfalls and a sudden contrasting scene—a very big white chunk out from a mountain—reputed to be one of the best sources of marble in Malaysia.

Fuel was running low in one of the cars, so we decided to get off the highway and stop at Simpang Ampat, just before Ipoh. There we sampled some local food near the petrol station while car number 1, the fastest car in the convoy, was nowhere in sight. We continued our journey and reached Taiping at around 6pm with the help of many 'navigators' who nearly got us lost. It is a beautiful town indeed and a good place to get away to from KL City. We also finally met up with the 'lost' car.

When we reached TIMS, we were greeted by Sis. Looi and Sis. Chuah who had been waiting for us since 5pm. We unpacked and freshened up. Later, Sis. Lay Hoon greeted us and we all took off for dinner at Meriden Hotel. It was a true 1970s experience as we walked in. The interior decor of the hotel had an aesthetic mood and feel. At least some things never change through the years. We went up the lift and it opened into the Chinese restaurant. Dinner was a good spread of sweet and sour meat, *assam* fish, *tofu* and vegetables complete with icy cold for some—hot for others—Chinese tea. The boys stuffed themselves whereas the girls didn't eat much. The weight-loss programme of the boys forgotten, how then not to put on those extra pounds!

Sis. Lay Hoon informed us that next on the programme was a meditation course conducted by Venerable Aggacitta at the Taiping Buddhist Society. As we walked under the temple arch, we were suffused with a serene and peaceful feeling. We also strolled around the temple complex and paid our respects in front of the Buddha statue, the bodhi tree and stupa. Some members offered candlelight at the Bodhi tree, as it was a new moon day.

Then, we rushed to the 3rd floor of the adjacent temple complex for the meditation



course. It was a new experience for some members as we learnt sitting and walking meditation. It was a hot evening even though the ceiling fans were spinning at their maximum. Later, we had our first audience with Venerable Aggacitta. He greeted us with a smile and asked about our journey to Taiping.

We then headed for a night tour of Taiping and some local food when raindrops started to fall. We shelved our plan for local food but then happily, the rain stopped and we headed for some *thong sui*, Taiping *popiah*, noodles and lots of ice cold drinks. Sis. Looi and Sis. Lay Hoon were with us all the way, exchanging ideas, being our tour guides and telling us all the little stories that make Taiping what it is today.

It was rather late after supper and we headed back to TIMS for the night. We took up the hall of the entire top floor. Before sleeping, we browsed through some books on display.

The next morning, we were greeted by a pounding sound at around 4am. Kah Fatt and I went to investigate and to our surprise, it was the nearby Taoist temple conducting its daily prayers. So, we headed back for the pillows and got up at 6.30am.

Sis. Lay Hoon reached TIMS quite early on Sunday morning to greet us and we all rushed for the washrooms to freshen ourselves. She had also brought some delicious curry puffs and buns. After recharging ourselves with breakfast, we offered a token of appreciation to Sis. Lay Hoon for SBS and TIMS.

The next stop was SBS and we meandered through a Chinese cemetery at around 7.30am. We parked our cars at the foot of the hill and Bro. Poh Eng, the transport manager of SBS, greeted

us in a Ford Ranger. It was an uneventful but bumpy journey up to SBS. A big Sadhu for the work that has gone into the building of the concrete access road to the Sanctuary

We were greeted by Venerable Aggacitta and we also made some new friends, one of whom was Bro. Tan Guan Soon, the Interim General Administrator, who later showed us the way to the sima pond where help was needed to dig up and remove sludge and grime. We put on surgical gloves and divided ourselves into two groups. The girls were stationed on the bed of the pond scooping mud and sludge while the boys stood on the top of the concrete wall of the dam, hauling up buckets of grime from one side of the wall and throwing the contents over the other side. It was dirty but fun as we were also joined by the youths of TIMS. All in all, we enjoyed ourselves helping to clean the sima pond area and were very tired after a good two-and-a-half-hours' work. We were proud to have helped clear a fair bit of grime and mud. "At least the dirty work is done", said Bro. Tan in jest.

Later, we were informed that out of Venerable Aggacitta's compassion for all the hardworking 'bees', dana was to be held at the sima area. Bro. Ng and Sis. Lay Hoon took us to a nearby stream to wash up. On the way, real bees stung some of us. Even Bro. Ng was not spared. Fortunately they were not serious stings. We organised ourselves for dana and stood with offerings of food in a line, together with SBS and TIMS devotees and supporters. It was a merry dana that afternoon, thanks to the preparation and donation of food by all. Pindapata was a new experience for some members as four monks led by Venerable Aggacitta walked down the line with their alms bowls.

Then, all present gathered for a Dhamma talk by Venerable Aggacitta under some shady durian trees. Young and old, we all listened attentively as Bhante unravelled a most creative title for the talk, 'BMSMYSD', an abbreviation for "Benevolent, Metta-Minded, Sincere, Matured, Youthful, Seekers' Devotion". It is also the acronym for our group, the Buddhist Missionary Society Malaysia Youth Section, Dhammaduta.

Bhante also thanked us for coming all the way to help realise the SBS dream and for putting into practice values that we had learnt along the way. The talk ended as he led all present in the sharing of merits to all beings. After that, we tucked into the many delicious sights and mouth-watering smells laid out for the day.

After lunch, we were taken on a short tour of SBS. Sis. Lay Hoon guided us to the Abbot's Office and Library and later to the open air Buddha Shrine. The vista of Taiping below us in the distance was a beautiful sight indeed. Bhante later suggested that we headed for the beautiful waterfall located about half-an-hour's walk from SBS but we were too tired. So, we settled for the river at the bottom of the hill. Nevertheless, we enjoyed ourselves with the gushing waters as we had a good dip to clean ourselves. Later, we packed up and headed back to our cars.

Sis. Lay Hoon then led us to Taiping's most famous *heong piah* factory and we joyfully bought some for home. Next, we headed back to TIMS for a short rest. We also managed to browse through some pictures as Sis. Lay Hoon explained the development of TIMS and SBS to us.

It was soon time to leave. We said our farewells and expressed our thanks to Venerable Aggacitta and all those present. We left Taiping at around 4pm and reached Kuala Lumpur at 7pm, breaking journey with a pit stop at the Sungai Buloh Overhead Restaurant for dinner. It was home all the way after that.

It has been a very enjoyable getaway and we'll be back for more of Taiping in the near future. A big Sadhu to all who have made our journey to Taiping, TIMS and SBS a fruitful and memorable journey.

Sabbe satta sukhi hontu. ॐ

22 Apr A hardwood log, which will mark the entrance to SBS, is being treated at 'Kueh Kak' Seng's house by Tan Son Lai. The Chinese characters and logo of SBS are being carved and gilded.

24 Apr Work starts at the site of the entrance gate with the digging of a foundation pit for the wooden pillar. Ven. Aggacitta goes to 'Kueh Kak' Seng's house to inspect the log that has taken Tan Son Lai three days to carve.



25 Apr How Eng Keong and his family visit and they donate a three-foot high Buddha image for the sima.



27 Apr Doreen Lim offers books which she has brought back from Sri Lanka to the SBS library as well as to Ven. Aggacitta.

28 Apr Ven. Teja of Myanmar and Ven. Bodhidhamma of India come to visit together with 6 Upekkha Group members. They bring along 92 neem seedlings for SBS.

1 May Members of the Buddhist Institute Sunday Dhamma School are here on a visit and offer dana at SBS. They help out as volunteers and sweep the roads.

3 May Lim Poh Eng and 'Kueh Kak' Leong bring up the iron legs for the entrance pillar. The footing for the pillar is also cast in reinforced concrete.

Giving to Receive

by Teo Chee Kian

“Why do you want to go there?” my mom asked me through the phone. “I want to learn something there while helping out,” I replied. Mommy was rather disappointed that her son did not want to spend his April holidays at home. All this transpired when I initially wanted to join a meditation retreat during the holidays but couldn't find one, so Bro. Hor Tuck Loon recommended that I helped out in Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary.

I arrived at SBS on Sunday, 14 April in the afternoon after Bro. Ooi Teow Keat picked me up from the Kamunting bus station. On the journey, I was glad thinking that the Lake Gardens and Taiping Zoo would greatly complement Sasanarakkha's scenery, but was later taken aback when we passed by a cemetery. “Well,” I thought, “it's a good place to do the contemplation on death and also to share merits!”

‘Breathtaking’ is the word to describe the scenery at Sasanarakkha and also the roller-coaster climb up the hill! By pure coincidence I met the youths from the Buddhist Missionary Society of Brickfields Maha Vihara spending their weekend there too! Later, I was introduced to Sis. Lay Hoon with whom I had earlier made arrangements through phone to go to Sasanarakkha. At the site office, I only got to talk to Venerable Aggacitta for a short while before he had to leave for the SBSMC meeting. I was rather tired after the journey and took a nap in the afternoon. That evening, Bro. Ling brought me to see Taiping by night and also for dinner.

The second morning, Bro. Ling, Bro. Tan, Bro. Tee and I went for breakfast together. Only after that did I have the opportunity to meet Bhante and properly introduce myself. Being a pampered child, I did not possess the skills and knowledge to operate heavy machinery and so could only help out with simple tasks. For the next few days, nothing significant happened, but the stay is still something I'm looking forward to again to take a break from the hectic lifestyle I lead in the city.

One interesting event was my visit to Khemarama where Venerable Kusala was staying. After breakfast on Wednesday morning, Bro. Tan and I were still in time for Venerable Kusala's alms round at the market. It was the first time I got to witness the traditional alms round where the monk moves from one place to another so that people could do dana. Also, I learned more about monks' rules and also got the chance to take a look at a monk's room!

And guess what? The food for lunch that day was delicious! Sis. Seong Ngo, the wife of the Chairperson of SBS Management Committee, personally prepared dinner for me! Ha... my good kamma (doing dana that morning) had ripened!

On my last three days of stay there, I followed Bhante each morning down the



pindapata trail. I felt honoured to have a token experience of ancient monks walking barefooted for miles just to receive dana. So, monks are not people who just sit down and meditate the whole day; they may in fact be much stronger and healthier than many city dwellers!

This trip to Sasanarakkha was not only an 'eye-opener' like a tourist visiting a foreign place, but also an opportunity to learn skills and to contribute to the strengthening and prolonging of the Buddha Sasana. This is to say I have “killed three birds with one stone!” Equally important was the satisfaction I gained from knowing that I'd maximized my holiday time making myself useful and staying away from laziness. Just like the Buddha said: “Those lazy people give all sorts of excuses, saying ‘it is too early’, ‘too late’, ‘too hot’ or ‘too cold’. These people never meet with success in their lives.” ☸

5 May The entrance pillar is installed at the entrance gate.



6 May Yeoh Kar Kheng and his two friends, Ng Sern Wei and How Chien Lee come in the afternoon to help out.

SBS library patron, See Chim Han, and his friends donate Pali texts to the library.

7 May Tan Guan Soon supervises the excavating and cleaning up of the sima pond in readiness for it to be patched with the clay that has been collected. He is assisted by 5 volunteer workers—Yeoh Kar Kheng, Ng Sern Wei, How Chien Lee, Kim Chin Kheng and Cheng Jin Seong.

9 May Ong Chin Cheong of Kuala Lumpur is here to apply for residency in SBS as a postulant.



10 May The open-sided kitchen area of the site office gets a facelift with corrugated zinc sheets being put up in place of the tattered tarpaulin that has been its makeshift roof.

Ven. Guttapala is here for a short visit.

12 May The SBS Management Committee meets for its monthly session. It lasts from 2.30pm to 9.30pm.

13 May Ong Chin Cheong and Ven. Guttapala leave for Kuala Lumpur after pindapata.

Ah Heng is here to lay stay wires as earthing for lightning protection in the buildings.

14-15 May Tan Guan Soon, Ling Ting Hook and Ko Kyi start lining the bed of the sima pond with the clay that was previously mined, in an effort to arrest seepage.

A group of about 20-odd people, including members of TIMS and its youth section, helps to compact the clay that has been spread on the dry bed of the sima pond. Each finds his/her own ingenious way of stamping, hopping, jumping and dancing on the clay. Even six-year old Yasa joins in when he sees the adults having such fun on the clay.

Ven. Mangala of Melaka is also here for two nights and has an interesting discussion with Ven.

Aggacitta about his adventures while travelling alone in India. He expresses interest in returning for a personal meditation retreat later.



18 May Tan Guan Soon leaves for Kuching after an almost 3-month stay as Interim General Administrator as well as general dogsbody. This is his third lengthy stay here. We gratefully appreciate his services and look forward to his 'fourth coming'.

20 May An afternoon thunderstorm knocked out the intercom extension to the Abbot's office and the fridge in the Dhamma Workers' Quarters.

23 May As part of the lightning protection system, stay wires are used to connect the earth wire to

the lower part of SBS where ground electric conductivity is better.

24 May Chiu Sheng Bin and Tan Heng Ghee are here to look into the progress of our landscaping efforts and the well being of the durian trees.

25 May It's Wesak Eve. In the late afternoon, TIMS members and friends help to arrange more than 2000 specially designed candles along both sides of the access road and internal road leading up to the Buddha Shrine. This is in preparation for the offering of lights ceremony in the evening. The total length of road is about 2 kilometers. At 7pm more than a hundred devotees gather at the foothill at the start of the approach road. The members of the SBS Sangha led by Ven. Aggacitta light the first candles. The devotees then followed, lighting up the candles as they climb up in the dusk. It is

SBS Revisited

by Yeoh Kar Kheng

I'm again here in SBS for a second visit. My first trip here was half a year ago. Although I am from Taiping, most of the time now I have been away pursuing an education. I am home during holidays and it is only during these times that I can volunteer my services.

This time around, I have several good friends as companions. They are my fellow volunteer workers, Chin Kheng, Jin Hooi, Jin Seong, Sern Wei and Chien Lee. Looking around me, I can see that the place is different from when I was here the first time. A few more kutis are up and there's even a Dhamma Workers' Quarters—a chalet-style wooden lodge. Aha... this time I have a proper abode! My friends and I are rather excited at the thought of getting to stay in a resort-like chalet. The picturesque beauty of Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary with its surrounding hills gives me the feeling that I have been frozen in time with Nature in a Chinese ink painting.

The invigorating air and captivating scenery have made us forget our stressful and vexing thoughts for the time being. Nevertheless, this is only fleeting and we have to come back to the present.

As Dhamma workers, we have been assigned the tasks of moving stones, paving a pathway and helping to clear the sima pond of sludge and sand—very tough jobs indeed, we soon realise. The energy and spirits of the young men who started out very enthusiastically and energetically about their tasks are soon drained. We realise now that we have neglected the exercise needed to build up physical strength. We also realise that work in SBS requires exceptional zeal, great patience and valiant determination.



I have had my fair share of education, possess some knowledge of Dhamma and meditate a little but compared to those who have been working silently day and night without complaint or regret, I feel ashamed. They may not appear to have much knowledge of Dhamma or meditation, but in my eyes they have the spirit of a bodhisatta.

We also have the rare opportunity to be near a highly respected yet unpretentious monk—Venerable Aggacitta—with whom we can discuss the Dhamma, meditate and chant in the midst of Nature.

It seems to me that for my friends, this exposure to Theravada Buddhism for the first time has been an unforgettable experience. "Remember to call me along the next time you come to SBS," some say.

We thank all those who have given us this opportunity to learn to give. May all beings be well, happy and peaceful. SBS

quite a visual treat to see glimmering lights snaking up towards the shrine area as each candle sparkles into life.



At about 8pm everyone is assembled at the open deck facing the Buddha Shrine. A special metta bhavana session is held for peace and happiness to spread all over Mother Earth.

26 May The SBS Sangha has been invited to the Taiping Buddhist Society for Wesak Day. Dana is held there and Ven. Aggacitta delivers a Dhamma talk on the significance of Wesak and the merits of offering lights.

10 June Cecelia Tham, our newly appointed state representative for Petaling Jaya, and her husband represent Ven. Nyanaramsi to SBS. ❧❧



A Good Cause

by Cecelia Lim

One fine day, there was a ring for help. It was the Public Relations Manager of Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary with an invitation. "Could you please serve on our Management Committee as the State Representative for Petaling Jaya?"

I was apprehensive about committing myself for I couldn't believe that SBS placed so much trust in my service! Yet how could I miss out on such an opportunity as this really is a good cause. "I'll give it a try for four months and if I find that it interferes with my commitments to other voluntary services, I shall look for a replacement," I replied.

Still very energetic in supporting the Buddha Sasana, I embarked on my first task—arranging Ven. Nyanaramsi's visit to SBS before he departs for Myanmar on 18 June.

Everything was set up in a jiffy thanks to email and soon Ven. Nyanaramsi was on his way to SBS with us on 10 June. My husband, Bro. Tham, and I drove to Taiping together with Shirley, a student of Ven. Nyanaramsi. It also gave us the opportunity to update ourselves on the latest developments in SBS and also to visit our son and daughter-in-law in Penang.

Along the journey we had a very enlightening Dhamma discussion with Ven. Nyanaramsi, who is a very strict practitioner of the Vinaya, about the Dhamma.

In Taiping we were well looked after and were put up in TIMS. Transport up to SBS was also arranged for us. SBS durian trees are in full bloom but none of the fruits dropped for us!

The next day we had the opportunity of joining in the Tuesday pindapata at the cemetery and in the afternoon we left for Penang. ❧❧

Long Time No See

Chiu Sheng Bin reports on his visit to SBS after a long absence.

Bro. Tan Heng Ghee and I got our act together and managed to visit SBS today, Friday, 24 May 2002, two days before Wesak. We were lucky to meet Bro. Ling and Bro. Ong,



both from Ipoh. We also ran into the house-keeping trio of Mrs. Koay, Bee Bee and her sister, Mrs. Ng.

We inspected the durian trees and the garden plants. We planted the sal seedling, which I had got from the Burmese Vihara in Kusinara in November 2001, behind the Buddha Shrine, next to the Bodhi tree.



Next we found a home in SBS for a miniature Black Lily which I had got from the Air Itam Dam which we had brought with us. Guess what? We made a wonderful discovery—the Black Lily is also indigenous to SBS! We stumbled upon it on the slope beside the road leading from the car park to the water tanks.

We also brought 31 neem seedlings. The nursery now has a total collection of 121 neem seedlings in bags, of which 90 seedlings were donated by the Penang Upekkha Group.

The durian trees are fruiting and the fruits should be dropping in a big way in a month or so. Brother Tan and I removed 60 fruits, most of which were borer damaged, to allow the healthy fruits to grow better.

We were glad to have planted the sal sapling just before Wesak, the birthday of our Lord Buddha.

Happy Wesak and may you all be happy and well. ❧❧

Chiu Sheng Bin is the Consultant Agromonist for SBS. He was Ven. Aggacitta's schoolmate and studied in Harvard under a scholarship. After the latter was ordained into the monkhood, they met once, and it was not until more than fourteen years later that Ven. Aggacitta heard that his former schoolmate had stayed in Mt. Elvira as a samanera under the guidance of Ven. Visuddhacara. Ven. Aggacitta was then residing in Balik Pulau and the two met up again there.

Sheng Bin's involvement with SBS came about after Ven. Aggacitta relocated to Taiping and decided to set up a monk training centre there. The former's advice was sought on the suitability of the site that was then under consideration.

Since then Sheng Bin has been providing his expertise in caring for the durian orchard and other plants in SBS. He even turns his garden at home into a temporary nursery when necessary for plants which he gets from as far away as India and Kalimantan where he is currently working. His friend, Tan Heng Ghee, usually accompanies him when he visits SBS and the duo become busy gardeners for a day.

Voices from Within

SBS Workers share their thoughts

Ling Ting Hook

As a member of IBDA (Ipoh Buddha Dhamma Association) and being a nature lover I offered to help out in the centre's backyard garden. Then I happened to see a poster of SBS showing a monk walking up a hill amidst the jungle outcrop. This stirred my curiosity about this place. A chance came one weekend when senior member Bro. Ong invited me to accompany him and Bro. Sam to see for ourselves the life of a forest monk and at the same time offer some service.



This service led me to a full time job in SBS. The place needed a full time worker and I had just left my bank job. After being here for two weeks, I felt like a different person. A lot of sweat, mosquito bites and leech bites come with the job. I have managed to avoid bee stings though. My kamma must be good. Besides gaining a lot of knowledge from Ven. Aggacitta and Bro. Tan Guan Soon while working with them, I have also learned a new trade.

As Theravadin Buddhists, we perform meritorious deeds, share our merits and make our aspirations. As such, I hope to overcome any spiritual or moral difficulties I may have to face.

Obhasa Tee

I came to SBS for two reasons. I wanted to renew my friendship with Ven. Aggacitta whom I first met twenty years ago, and to pay my debt of gratitude to him for helping me to refine my understanding of the Vinaya when I was a bhikkhu nineteen years ago.



I am impressed with the physical structures which are well laid out. The other half of the task is now ahead, i.e. the building of the minds and hearts of Dhammafarrers. This will be a more challenging one.

I wish Ven. Aggacitta and the SBS members every success in what's ahead. SBS

SASANARAKKHA BUDDHIST SANCTUARY

KATHINA DAY

10 NOVEMBER 2002



PROGRAMME

7.00am	Offering kathina cloth to Sangha
7.05	Awarding kathina cloth to qualified bhikkhu
7.15	Sewing kathina robe (monks only)
	Breakfast for devotees
7.45	Buddhist Hymns by BGF
9.00	Offering kathina accessories ¹
10.00	Break
10.30	Pindapata
11.00	Dhamma talk
11.45	Lunch
1.00pm	Break
2.00	Continue sewing kathina robe (monks only)
4.00	Refreshment break
4.30	Continue sewing kathina robe (monks only)
7.00	Spreading kathina

¹ Kathina accessories refer to allowable requisites, other than the Kathina cloth, offered to the monks on Kathina Day, including potential requisites obtainable from monetary donations entrusted to their kappiya-karakas.

Let us come together once again in a united show of support for our Malaysian Sangha

Contributions are most welcome. Please note that your contributions will be used to defray expenses during the vassa and Kathina Day. Any excess collected will be kept for supporting the SBS monastics and for the general maintenance of the sanctuary.

The Kathina Ceremony Organising Committee will be most happy to:

- provide you lunch on that day
- facilitate your hotel booking if you so require

Important note:

- To facilitate arrangements please contact the SBS office at least two weeks before your arrival date (Tel: 05-8084429)
- Wear footwear without high heels, preferably sneakers.
- Bring your own torchlights if you want to come up early to witness the offering of kathina cloth.

Organised by SBS Management Committee and sponsored by Buddhist Gem Fellowship

WE HAVE MOVED



The SBS office was temporarily located at TIMS premises. Now we have shifted the office up to SBS. So please get in touch with us through:

Email : office@sasanarakkha.org
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 Fax : 05-8084423
 Mailing address: Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary
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 Jalan Medan Taiping 4
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SBS Management Committee 2002/2004



Perlis Lim Tai Eng ■ **Kedah** Tneh Chin Aun ■ **Penang (Island)** Allan Koh ■ **Penang (Mainland)** Sim Boon Lee
Perak (North) Lee Siew Chee ■ **Perak (South)** Chew Cheow Beng ■ **Selangor** Dr. Wong Wai Cheong / Cecelia Lim
Federal Territory (KL) David Yeoh ■ **Malacca** Kenny Chan ■ **Negeri Sembilan** Stanley Chen ■ **Pahang** Chin Wai Fatt
Kelantan Loke Chee Kong / Choong See Yoong ■ **Terengganu** Tan Sow Swum ■ **Johor (North & West)** Ang Teck Hock
Johor (South & East) Sim Poh Hock ■ **Sabah** Soh Poh Soon ■ **Sarawak** Tan Guan Soon ■ **Singapore** Koe Lian Sim
Western Australia Siah Chee Way ■ **South Africa** Lionel John Theron