Sāsanārakkha

✣ NEWSLETTER OF SASANARAKKHA BUDDHIST SANCTUARY a special project of Taiping Insight Meditation Society ✣ *RESTRICTED CIRCULATION ONLY* ✣ Issue 5 ✣ January 2002 ✣

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Harmony and Joy in SBS' First Kathina

by Akiñcana

Out-of-town supporters and locals share in the kathina day joy. Devotees get to see monks making the kathina robe and offer requisites to the monks the SBS way.

SBS celebrated its first Kathina on 18 November 2001. Kathina ceremonies are well known among the Buddhist fraternity in Malaysia, but this particular one was very much different from all others.

A striking feature in the Kathina Ceremony here was that the monks personally made the kathina robe. We saw one piece of kathina cloth offered to the monks soon after the break of dawn. The monks then measured, cut, sewed, and dyed it to make it into a proper robe, all within that day.

This is actually following the ancient tradition as set out by the Buddha himself. Apart from this kathina cloth, only six sets of robes and requisites were offered to the six monks present for the occasion. Devotees were discouraged from offering robes in excess of this. Many devotees found it strange when this was explained to them in the months leading to the kathina ceremony. The rationale is that if excess robes were offered the monks would not wear them. Instead of spending the money on such robes, devotees were asked to donate towards the Kathina Fund which would then be used to buy necessary requisites as well as finance the maintenance of the Sanctuary during the vassa

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Joint Sponsors of SBS' First Kathina

- SBS Management Committee
- Taiping Insight Meditation Society
- Bandar Utama Buddhist Society
- Subang Jaya Buddhist Association
- Buddhist Wisdom Centre
- Santarama Buddhist Hermitage
- Sukhi Hotu
- Selangor Buddhist Vipassana Meditation Society
- Buddhist Gem Fellowship
- Upekkha Group
- Malaysian Buddhist Meditation Society
- Management Committee and Devotees of the Mahindarama Buddhist Temple
- Dhammaramsi Devotees

Editorial

It is often said that a picture paints a thousand words. So in this issue of SĀSANĀRAKKHA, we have in store for you a number of articles which were written with this in mind. As one of our staunch supporters pointed out, our readers would prefer to look at interesting pictures that will capture their attention and sustain their interest rather than plough through a sea of words. We thank him for this observation.

Talking about a thousand words brings to mind a saying from the Dhammapada, which goes, "One useful sentence is better than a thousand useless words." We can assure you that those who have contributed articles for this issue have spent a lot of time and effort to bring you useful words within useful sentences.

We hope that these sentences and pictures will make SBS more meaningful to you. Thus far, SĀSANĀRAKKHA has succeeded in some measure to do so, if the response to the two major events carried out this year is any indication. Busloads of devotees from Buddhist organisations all over the country participated in the Sima Declaration Ceremony held on 1 July as well as the Kathina Ceremony on 18 November. The support from out-of-town devotees has been tremendous.

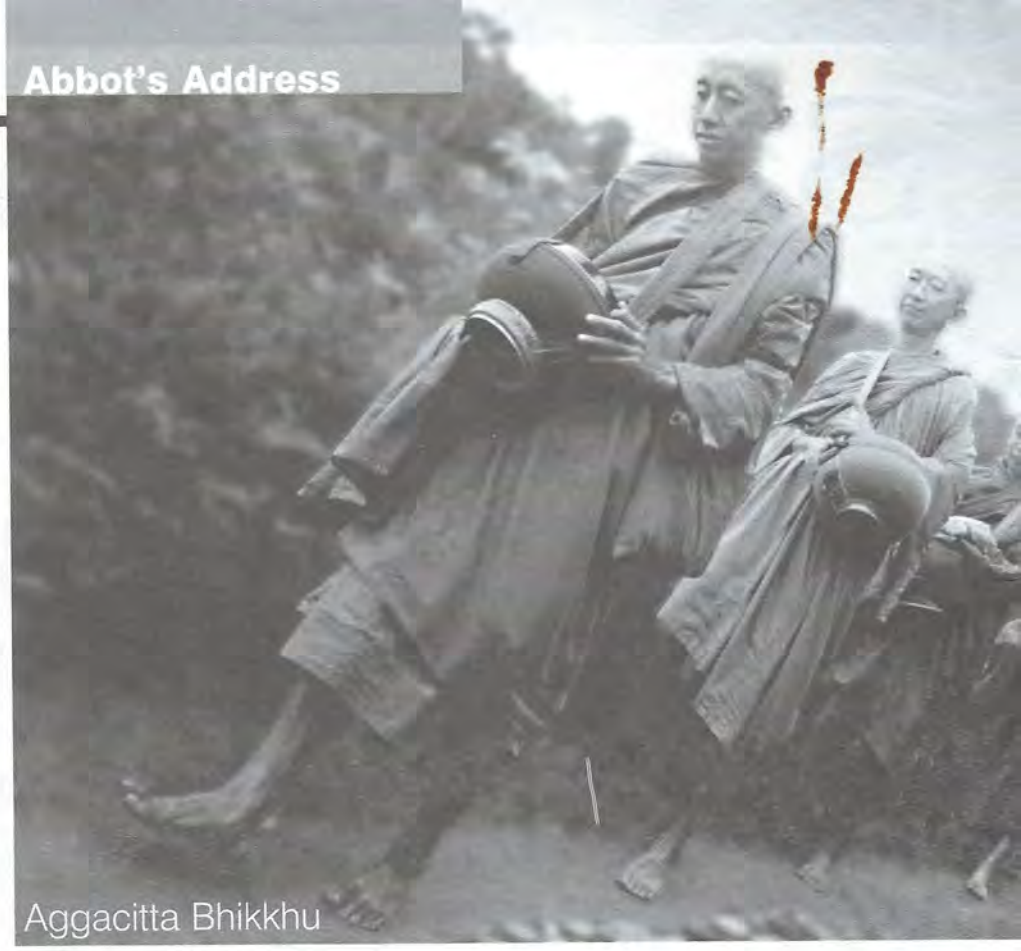
We also conducted another ceremony that, although not as widely publicised, was just as important. This was the installation of a stupa above the roof of the sima pavilion. Mind you, it is 'not just any stupa', but a special one (see article on p.19).

We would like to thank all who have given their impressions of these ceremonies, which we have compiled for you in this issue. Do continue to give us more feedback. The management committee of SBS thanks you for the bouquets of praises that you have presented to us, but we would like to see some thorns with the roses. So feel free to send the thorns together with the roses. Your constructive suggestions will be very much welcome.

Happy browsing. SBS

Looi Sow Fei

Abbot's Address



Aggacitta Bhikkhu

Lanky First Steps

towards a Malaysian Theravada Buddhist Identity

If you're familiar with Thai wats, Sri Lankan temples and Burmese monasteries, you'd probably tick "none of the above" when you visit SBS. Built on stilts and hugging steep slopes, the kutis at SBS reflect a unique Malaysian identity. "Practical and beautiful. Certainly an award-winning design," said an appreciative visitor from Subang Jaya Buddhist Association.

Q Jade Saw Architects has combined reinforced concrete, steel, timber, cemboard and PU-foam metal roofing to create comfortable and practical living space within well-proportioned claddings. The relatively high roof, sliding doors and panels, as well as semi-open decks of the kutis are conducive to monastic life in a tropical environment. They are airy and cool dwellings that keep the heat at bay. Each kuti has its own roofed walkway, attached bathroom and built-in desk and cupboard. SBS monks can study and practise the Dhamma in self-contained seclusion.

Several persons have commented that the sima pavilion is reminiscent of our National Mosque. In the initial stages of design, I asked Jade if she had got her inspiration from the Bidayu Headhouse of Sarawak because I noticed some resemblance. Jade said that she didn't even know what a headhouse was or how it looked.

"Your stupa on the sima roof is beautiful, but it reminds me of the dome of a mosque," a staunch supporter commented candidly. A visitor to the newly completed vihara that houses my office-cum-library-cum reception area remarked, "This building is very nice, airy, modern and unique." The designers had been briefed to come up with something Malaysian and the success of their creation is evident. To the observant, there is a distinct "Malaysianness" in the building design. SBS is certainly not a Thai wat, Sri Lankan temple or Burmese monastery.

This conscious evolution of a Malaysian Theravada Buddhist Identity is not only confined to physical development. SBS monks' recitation of Pali passages for blessings and other special occasions will also sound unique to those who are acquainted with Thai, Sri Lankan or Burmese Pali chanting. Students of International Pali pronunciation will perhaps notice the attempt to standardise the accent and rhythm of the

syllables so that harmonious and sonorous group recitation can be achieved.

In the process of reviving traditional monastic practices on the brink of extinction in Malaysia, SBS monks have also adapted to modern technology. To practically determine real noontime (which has significance in monastic life), we experimented with the use of a spirit level, magnetic compass, and mathematical instruments like the set-square, protractor and compass. Related data were also downloaded from the Internet to compare with our readings.

Formerly monks had to make and dye their own robes. Modern monks are so well supported by lay devotees that they have forgotten their humble roots. To remind them of their gratitude to their benefactors, SBS monks are required to go through the tedious process of making and dyeing their own robes at least once. Instead of hand sewing, they are taught the option of using sewing machines. Natural dyes were prescribed by the Buddha to match the allowable shades of robe colour. The production of such dyes is time-consuming and many of them fade or run after a few washings. It is educational for a monk to learn how to make such natural dyes and use them to dye his robes. However, for practical reasons we can use chemically dyed cloth to make robes and re-dye them with self-made dye. In SBS, we have found that a concoction of *bakau* bark and *buah jering* shells can produce reddish brown dye. Lately, during the construction of the water sima pavilion, we noticed that *belian* wood also gives reddish brown dye. When applied on a chemically dyed ochre cotton cloth, the result is a sombre brown colour. Thai forest monks use jackfruit pith while some Burmese monks use *ficus* bark or shells of ironwood fruits to make robe-dye. I was told that mahogany bark is used by some monks in Sri Lanka to make their dye.

In SBS' first Kathina Ceremony, the monks perpetuated the ancient practice of communal participation in making and dyeing the kathina robe. This interesting attempt to conform to the scriptural tradition in a modern Malaysian context is graphically explained in my booklet, *Kathina Then and Now*, which was published for free distribution to commemorate the occasion.

Hiking down the slopes of a forest monastery and its surrounding hills for pindapata and climbing up again with a bowl full of almsfood is not only an age-old tradition of forest monks, but also good practice for physical and spiritual health. SBS monks have two routes to choose from: a longer cross-country hike through orchards, streams and jungle; or a shorter but steeper walk along the road to the coffee shops near the foothill.

These are some of the lanky first steps that SBS is taking towards the conscious evolution of a Malaysian Theravada Buddhist Identity. Malaysian youths who have been planning to take up the robes, as well as local monks desirous of practising in accordance with the scriptural tradition can now have the opportunity to join us for training in our own home territory.

SBS is not the dream of only one monk. It is a desideratum for all caring Theravada Buddhists, especially in Malaysia. Let us rally to make SBS a thriving centre for monastic training. So young men and venerable monks, please do come and join us to help vitalise the Sasana in our country. SBS

Offer what is useful, devotees told

• FROM PAGE ONE

period and defray the expenses of the Kathina Ceremony. Excess funds collected would go into the running of SBS.

Many were able to accept this different approach but there were also those who said that they preferred to offer their own set of robes, fearing that their merits would be less if they did not do so. It is not easy to change attitudes and thinking that have been entrenched through years of practice. Maybe in the years to come people may accept the idea that offering something useful and needed could be more meritorious than doing otherwise. Anyway, we should not be doing things for monks with the sole aim of accumulating merits. Just help with a sincere heart without expecting anything in return. Kamma will take its own course.

As early as 5.00am devotees gathered at the foot of SBS waiting for transport up the hill. They were mostly helpers and a handful of excited visitors who in their excitement sacrificed a couple of hours' sleep that morning. At 7.00am after breakfast the kathina cloth was offered to the Sangha in a simple ceremony by representatives of the thirteen organisations which were joint sponsors of the kathina. The Sangha in turn offered it to Ven. Aggacitta, the most qualified bhikkhu amongst them. Thereafter they started to measure, cut and sew the kathina robe. Meanwhile, devotees and helpers had their own breakfast of dumplings and sandwiches.

A steady stream of visitors had by then started to flow in. Some came in the 4WDs provided, while the stronger and younger ones hiked up. There was an air of festivity all around. You could see the surprised look on the faces of people who were here for the first time. Many of those who had expected to see a big temple up on the hill were surprised to find quaint little buildings tucked among the trees. Someone even inquired if he could build his own kuti here. Those who had been here before were busy explaining the intricacies of SBS to their friends and relatives. The durian trees laden with fruits were an added attraction. There were numerous exclamations of *wah!* By 9.00am most of the visitors had arrived, eagerly looking forward to taking part in the ceremonies.

It was time for the offering of kathina accessories. Two rows of devotees lined the winding concrete road leading to the bridge of the sima pavilion. The sima pavilion, with its unusual octagonal structure, "floating" in a pond was a sight to behold. Its reflection shimmered in the water. The trays of accessories were carried down the winding road for all present to touch and make their aspirations. The trays were then taken into the sima pavilion and offered to the monks.

At approximately 10.30am the *pindapata* started. The monks stood in a row with their alms bowls while the devotees each offered a spoonful of rice. You could see happiness written on everybody's face as this gave each a chance to offer something personally to a monk. The monks moved to a nearby area beneath a canopy to help themselves to a choice of other food that had been offered earlier.

The monks assembled in the sima pavilion while the devotees settled down around the sima pond for the Dhamma talk. Ven. Aggacitta, the abbot, delivered a talk on kathina and dana. This held the attention of the devotees for about an hour. It gave the lay devotees an insight into the purpose of holding a kathina ceremony. I could see by the way the listeners were nodding their heads and smiling at each other that the talk certainly had an impact on them.

Birds were released, symbolising the giving of life. For this event the children were most attentive as the sight of so many birds flying into the trees was indeed captivating. The monks then conducted blessings and sharing of merits for all beings after which devotees and monks settled down to their meal.

Many of the visitors crowded the donation tent to make contributions to the Sangha as well as towards the running of the Sanctuary. Not to be outdone by the adults, little children were seen digging into their pockets for coins to drop into the donation boxes. So happy were they that they went round asking their friends to do the same.

In between the ceremonies, the monks were busy sewing in the sima pavilion. The devotees had a full view of them through the glass louvre windows that made up the walls of the pavilion. It was indeed an unusual and heartwarming sight to see the monks cooperate and work in unison to measure, cut and sew the pieces together earnestly trying to complete the robe. Some found it rather amusing that monks could sew. It was something new to the devotees, as many did not expect to see monks turning into tailors.

Immediately after lunch, the visitors started to dwindle as many made their way down the hill

to check out of hotels and to start on their journey home. The traffic control team was hard at work to make sure that the convoy of 4WDs moved smoothly. Other teams were picking up rubbish, clearing up the lunch area and doing whatever needed doing. As the majority of the visitors had left, the donation counter too decided to "close shop".

The monks finished sewing later than expected. It was already evening then and we had finished our respective duties. The handful of us around had the chance to really observe the monks and see them as very down-to-earth people. Like us, they still have their likes and dislikes, and can still feel irritated with their fellow monks. That day, the spirit of harmony and friendliness was evident amongst themselves as they joked and pulled each other's legs whilst working together. There was no ill will and each was happy and grateful for the other's company and help. For me, it was the first time that I had witnessed such an event and I must say that it reminds me to be less critical of others' shortcomings. I hope the others present felt the same. The lesson to be learnt here is to try to be more forgiving and harmonious in our approach to life. Be truly a member of the community.

We should emulate such a spirit of comradeship if we want a happy, peaceful and harmonious community. Lay people should learn a lesson from this. They should work together harmoniously and unselfishly. This is food for thought for members of our community and society.

The final part of the day's events was when the monks, as members of the Sangha, decided what to do with the requisites offered. It was done in an atmosphere of gaiety and fun. There was plenty of laughter and joy among not only the Sangha members but also the few lay devotees left as the monks went through the items offered and decided what to do with each.

As we looked down the hill, the lights in Taiping were like fireflies twinkling in the distance. The few of us left for home to a welcome rest, and SBS and its residents were left to enjoy the peace and tranquility that is characteristic of the Sanctuary. The monks had successfully completed their rains retreat and spread the inaugural kathina at Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary. May all beings share in the merits accrued that day and be well and happy. SBS

Intake of Monks & Postulants

Website: http://sasanarakkha.cjb.net/ Email: sbsmail@pd.jaring.my

Training centre for Malaysian Theravada Buddhist monks on

- Vinaya (monastic law and discipline)
- Dhutanga (ascetic practices)
- Meditation
- Pali language
- Propagation skills

Course duration:
Varies according to individual capability and aptitude

Media of instruction:
English (translation into Chinese language available)

Vitalise the Sasana
Preserve its purity
In the words of the Ancient Elders,
"In the future the conscientious will protect the Sasana!"
Would you like to be a protector of the Sasana?

Enrol now!

Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary

Touching Peace at SBS Kathina Day

The interdependent nature of the relationship between the Sangha and the laity was exemplary on this day. A spirit of cooperation prevailed throughout the day as people mingled in an atmosphere of joy and festivity. SBS Perlis State Representative, Lim Tai Eng witnesses this himself.

Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary held its first Kathina Ceremony on 18 November 2001. Ven. Aggacitta, the abbot of SBS, shared with the lay disciples the way the ceremony was held during the time of the Buddha.

We were supposed to be at the site by 6.00am. As we were late, we took a 4WD up the small hill to the Sanctuary. It was indeed a bumpy and winding road all the way. The only good thing about this short journey was that everybody on board was in a jovial mood. All were excited to reach the destination. The smiles on their faces could only tell us that they were looking forward to the event despite the rough ride uphill.

Along the journey, some lay devotees were seen walking slowly up the steep concrete road, step by step. They too were in a happy mood as if going on a holiday. Some waved their hands at those of us who were in the jeep. Their slow footsteps uphill reminded me of walking meditation: the only way they could reach the top was by doing it step by step, slowly and mindfully. Although it must have been a tiring journey to the top, their enjoyment was evident.

The journey uphill took us to the administrative centre of SBS. The surroundings were still dark, but the atmosphere was cool, with a light breeze. From the hilltop we walked down the steep concrete road, before we reached the concrete steps that took us down to the valley where the sima pavilion is located. The sima is very important, for it is here that all official monastic acts are conducted.

At about seven in the morning representatives from the joint sponsors of the Kathina offered the kathina cloth to the Sangha. According to tradition, a piece of white cloth is given to the Sangha. The monks will dye it using natural dye after it has been made into a proper robe. On this particular occasion however, a length of brown cloth was offered.

After the cloth had been offered, the monks had a discussion to decide to whom amongst them the cloth should be awarded. Ven. Aggacitta was unanimously selected. The Sangha then performed a monastic act to make the matter official. With the use of various tools, such as scissors, sewing machines, tailor's chalk, needles and thread, the monks started to work together to make the kathina robe.

By 9.00am there was a large group of devotees at the site. It was also time for offering the kathina accessories and some individuals had been selected to represent the laity. I was honoured to be entrusted to carry one of the trays that contained a set of robes. I was somewhat nervous as I wanted to do it perfectly. We were told to walk past the devotees lined up along the way to the sima pavilion so that the devotees could touch the trays in a symbolic gesture of offering.

As we moved forward along the path, we noted that our steps had become more and more stable. The lay devotees' wholesome and single-minded thoughts in their act of offering must have contributed towards this stability. Everyone who touched the trays said, "Sadhu, sadhu, sadhu."

When we entered the sima hall, the fixed expressions on the faces of the monks attracted our attention. To me, it conveyed the idea of "Come what may, our monks cannot be swayed by external conditions surrounding them." We then bowed three times, with our foreheads, hands and legs touching the ground, one each to our Buddha (the Teacher), the Dhamma (His Teaching) and the Sangha (the Keepers of the Teaching). Then we mindfully walked out of the sima pavilion.

The next event was the *pindapata*. This took place at about 10.00am. On this particular occasion, each devotee was provided with a spoonful of rice. They walked in single file to where the monks were standing, and placed the rice into the alms bowls. After that, the monks went to nearby tables to help themselves to various kinds of food that had been offered earlier.

To reciprocate this act of giving (*dana*), Ven. Aggacitta delivered a talk in English on the significance of the Kathina Ceremony. For the benefit of devotees who could not understand English, Ven. Mahañano translated the talk into Hokkien.

Lay devotees were scattered everywhere in the compound, sitting under the shade of the trees or the tents that had been put up. There were huge boulders along the side of the stream that leads to the artificially constructed lake. The sima pavilion is located in the centre of this lake. It was pleasing to see some lay devotees sitting in the meditative posture on these boulders listening to the Dhamma talk. Could this scene have been the same some 2500 years ago?

By 6.30pm we could see the paddy-field pattern sewing line of the kathina robe. Ven. Aggacitta meticulously inspected the robe. Any sewing defect found was rectified. The smiling faces of the monks and the laity told of their peace and joy.

The robe was subsequently washed, dyed and dried. Some lay devotees even helped in the process. Ven. Aggacitta smilingly commented that the kathina robe was supposed to be the effort of the monks, not lay people.

At about 9.30pm, the job was completed. With that, Ven. Aggacitta spread the kathina and the other monks rejoiced in it. He continued by saying a big 'Sadhu' to all who had participated

and gave a brief talk on the interdependent relationship between the Sangha and the lay devotees. These two groups cannot be independent of each other. This talk did touch us.

Let me show you a paragraph taken from the book *Kathina Then and Now* written by Ven. Aggacita.

> The Buddha passed away more than 2500 years ago. If the Sangha had not preserved the teachings we would not know what Buddhism is. We would not know what is wholesome and unwholesome; what *dana*, *sila* and *bhavana* mean. It was because of the Sangha that the Sasana has survived and it will be because of the Sangha that the Sasana will be perpetuated. Monks have renounced worldly occupations so that they can devote their lives to the study, practice and propagation of the Buddha's teaching. They are dependent on lay support because they do not earn a living. By generously supporting the Sangha with your hard-earned wealth, you are doing your part to help propagate the Sasana now and perpetuate it for future generations.

The Venerable concluded the ceremony by sharing merits with all beings. The monks then distributed the requisites among themselves.

By that time there were only a handful of lay devotees left. Most of them were the Kathina Organising Committee members. As we walked up the concrete steps to the site office where transport was waiting to take us down, we could now hear the 'sound' of peace in the natural surroundings. Is Mother Nature coming back once again to take control of the area after all the lay disciples had left? We wondered. Judging from the way the Sanctuary was planned and built, we are assured that Buddhists can live with Mother Nature — side by side. Together we would work out a symbiotic solution that suited both parties.

As we reflected on this ceremony at the end of the day, we could only give our three bows to Venerable Aggacitta (and to what he represents) for sharing with us this Dhamma. We felt that he, in leading this Noble life, is full of effort and determination to preach and practise what the Buddha had intended for the Sangha to do some 2500 years ago. Do try to read the book *Kathina Then and Now* and you will understand why I say this. We also extend our appreciative joy to the Kathina Ceremony Organising Committee for holding this event. It successfully brought the Buddhist community together.

To the readers of this article who did not come to witness this Kathina Ceremony, let me tell you that this short article cannot possibly describe what we saw, touched, and experienced there. Having returned home and pondered over it, we would like to have more of it. It may be attachment, but slowly we will learn just to touch it. **SBS**

Guidelines for Visitors to SBS

The Management Committee would like to make proper arrangements to accommodate the needs of visitors to SBS. At the same time we want to avoid unnecessary interruption to the routine of the resident monks. Hence, we ask that all intending visitors adhere to the following guidelines when planning to visit SBS.

- All visitors, whether they come as individuals or in organised groups, need to give at least 2-3 days' notice of their intended visit.
- The correct procedure for all visitors is to inform the SBS Administrative Office of the intended visit. This is to discourage trespassers, as SBS is private property. You can contact the office as follows

  Tel and Fax: 05-8052977
  Email: sbsmail@pd.jaring.my
  Times: Monday – Friday: 8.30am – 5.30pm
  Saturday: 8.30am – 12.00noon
- It is not possible to provide transport for all visitors up to SBS, especially those who come in big groups. As such, transportation is normally provided for those who are physically unable to make the climb.
- Visitors are asked to be appropriately attired, as befitting a visit to a religious place.
- As SBS slopes are steep and irregular, visitors are advised to wear proper walking shoes. Footwear such as slippers and high-heeled shoes can cause untoward accidents and injuries such as sprains.

Shapes & Figures

SBS supporters must have been trying to figure out how we are shaping the future now – now that we are proud of the figures in the TIMS (SBS Project Fund), which have grown to be so shapely within such a short space of time. This section gives an inside picture of the latest SBS developments in building works and financial standing.

Continuing The Journey Ahead

SBS Geo-technical Consultant Dr. Soo Kian Sin continues with his report on the journey that he began in the third issue of SASANARAKKHA. Ven. Aggacitta, acting Project Manager of the Building Development Team, joins him to keep you abreast of the latest in the construction and development scene.

In the January issue of *Sasanarakkha*, we took a first look at the many facets of development and our achievements. Specifically, we outlined

- the engineering challenges of building development in a rugged and rolling terrain with problems such as erosion, slope stability, accessibility and logistic constraints
- the infrastructure development comprising the external and internal access roads, and the electrical and water supplies
- the facilities development, which requires suitable site selection to meet the stringent requirements of minimum disturbance to the environment and strategic location of buildings to harmonise with nature
- the lack of sufficient engineering data, which necessitated very detailed consideration of and judgement on various inter-related technical aspects.

DEVELOPMENT IN RUGGED AND ROLLING TERRAIN

Signal Grass

Introduced by Mr. KL Khor, who sponsored the grass seeds and trained our team of volunteers, the terra-control method of seeding signal grass on steep slopes has been very successfully implemented. Now the ugly patches of exposed laterite slopes are completely covered by lush green tufts of signal grass. In a critical area (Nursery Corner), erosion control mats (EPM) were firmly fixed onto the trimmed slope through the planting of steel bars capped with reinforced concrete (r.c.). A special mixture of soil, adhesive, fertiliser and grass seeds was then plastered onto the EPM. A thick layer of signal grass now covers this slope. Eventually the concrete caps will hardly be visible.

Turfing

To complement the terra-control method mentioned above, which has been effectively carried out by Ah Seng and his team of

volunteers, we contracted out the task of close-turfing the slope between the Abbot's kuti and office with cow-grass. The result was quite dramatic—instant erosion control—compared to the gradual germination and growth of signal grass seeds. We got a pleasant surprise when the contractor, Mr. Maniam, announced that he was not going to charge us any labour costs!

Bakau Piling

Bakau piling was done in several areas to stabilise the steep failed slopes. The landscaping team headed by Ms. Chen Sew Kian quickly followed up by planting flowering creepers so that now the previously exposed area of bakau piles is attractively camouflaged by a protective layer of foliage. We hope that this will improve the durability of the bakau piles, which endures better under moist conditions.

Drainage

More drains have been constructed at strategic areas to prevent erosion and further slope failures. The Damage Control Team has also been more vigilant in patrolling the site during heavy rain to study water flow and to locate problem areas so that suitable remedial action can be taken promptly, e.g. clearing clogged drains, making new drains and, controlling water flow in newly-excavated areas.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

Road System

The external and internal access roads have long been completed. A car park with an area of about 130 square metres was built in front of the Abbot's office in June. Being one of the limited, large, flat areas within the hilly terrain of SBS, it has functioned as a gathering space for crowds of devotees during big occasions. This includes the Sima Declaration Ceremony on 1 July 2001, and the visit of more than 140 members of Bandar Utama Buddhist Society on 20-21 October 2001. Although not ideal in terms of capacity, it has also served as a temporary storage space for flower pots, building materials, etc.

As a goodwill gesture to the caretaker and devotees of the Tiger General Shrine at the foothill of SBS, the management committee decided to sponsor the construction of a stretch of r.c. road and pavement (totalling approximately 160 square metres) next to the shrine and along the access road to SBS. Volunteer workers and visitors often park their vehicles near the shrine, located at the fringe of the Hokkien Cemetery, when they wish to go up to SBS on foot or by 4WD.

Electricity and Telecommunication

TNB power supply was finally energised on 24 May 2001 after a long wait since the spun poles were first put up on 15 December 2000. Thanks to Ir. Low Fatt Lum, we did not have to build a sub-station, which would have cost us several thousand ringgit. Within a week of this, Telekom Malaysia fixed two sets of RILL (Radio in Local Loop) telephones. Shortly afterwards a fax machine and an internal intercom system were installed. The latter is particularly useful because of the hilly terrain.

The availability of electricity and suchlike modern facilities has made administration more convenient and efficient. At the same time, the lightning-prone situation of SBS has created endless problems for us with our electrical equipment. We are presently investigating proposals to install an extensive lightning protection system, which will set us back several thousand ringgit.

Water Supply

Late last year, we discovered two springs while trying to locate a suitable site for making a larger reservoir across a small stream that has been the main water source of SBS. The discovery prompted us to modify our original water treatment plans. As we no longer needed to treat the crystal clear water from the lower spring, the proposed treatment tank is now used as a sedimentation tank that feeds a lower collection tank with a capacity of over

1000 gallons. These two r.c. tanks have been fully operational since the end of June. Water from the stone-pitching reservoir built across the stream is now used for gardening and construction purposes.

By early December, five additional poly-tanks of 600-gallon capacity each were installed—three at the highest spring source and two supplementing the existing chamber-link tank below the main crossroads at SBS. Now buildings in the higher areas, e.g. Abbot's office and kuti, existing site office, Dhamma workers' quarters and kuti 1, are serviced by the upper spring instead of the lower spring. The lower spring tank is now used to service the facilities located below the existing site office, mainly the new kutis.

The remaining two poly-tanks connected to the chamber-link tank will be used to supplement water for construction works around the existing double-storey lower kuti, where most of Phase 3 development will take place. With a total capacity of 1200 gallons, this source can eventually service the Sangha Central Facility, library, classroom and other kutis of later phases.

FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT

Phase 1

By the time this issue of Sāsanārakkha is published, Phase 1 development—comprising the Abbot's office and kuti, as well as four single kutis—would have been completed.

Phase 2

Since 1 August 2001, Tong Hup Engineering Sdn. Bhd. has been busily engaged in Phase 2 construction works. To date, it has completed the r.c. foundation and steel superstructure for kuti 1. By 18 November 2001, SBS' first Kathina Ceremony, Tong Hup had completed the sima pavilion. It also successfully constructed the Dhamma workers' quarters (DWQ) so that yogis could use it during the meditation retreat for SBS helpers in late December 2001. Initially these buildings were supposed to be constructed by Sunset Villa Sdn. Bhd., the contractor for Phase 1, but since it could not deliver as promised, we agreed to allow other interested parties to tender for the project. This resulted in Tong Hup being awarded the contract for Phase 2 construction.

Phase 3

Even as Phase 2 buildings are in the process of construction, Architect Jade Saw and her team are busy designing the structures for Phase 3. These include

- The Administrative Complex comprising a meeting room for the SBS Management Committee, reception area for visitors, publication room, toilet, kitchenette and storeroom
- Car porch, public toilets and storeroom near the Admin Complex
- Sangha Central Facilities comprising open as well as enclosed spaces for dyeing robes and baking alms-bowls; a sewing room, pantry, storeroom and room for a *kappiyakaraka* (monks' steward)
- Sangha Library
- Classroom for 20 monks
- Bridges to cross the stream over to the *pindapata* trail and kutis.

Buddha Shrine

Following Johnny Tay's offer of a custom-made lava Buddha image (meditation posture, 3 feet high) we selected a rocky outcrop near the NW corner of SBS site for it. The natural layout of the huge boulders seems to be waiting for a Buddha image to be seated majestically among them, overlooking SBS and the scenic valley of the Air Kuning dam. There was even a space behind the seat for the Buddha image, which was ideal for planting a sapling of the bodhi tree from Bodh Gaya. Devotees who have been asking, "Where's the shrine?" will certainly have their question answered when they see it.

BUILDING WITH SCANT ENGINEERING DATA

Design Considerations

This article will now focus on the basic development of a very important facility at SBS—the water sima pavilion. As the name implies, the pavilion requires a body of water over which it will sit. Therefore, a water retention structure or dam had to be constructed to create the pond. We found the ideal site for making such a pond along the

bed of a small stream located at the eastern portion of SBS. Based on the dimensions of the sima pavilion structure and the required clearance between it and the bank of the pond, we estimated that the pond should be roughly 325 square metres (equivalent to 18 metres across) in size.

The design of a dam requires careful investigation of site topography and ground conditions. However, the lack of accurate and detailed survey data and information on ground conditions here presented many uncertainties in the design work and therefore necessitated very prudent engineering judgement. To obtain the basic data for design, rough on-site measurements were carried out and elevations surveyed using survey equipment. For this reason, allowance was given for possible changes required during construction to suit site conditions.

Site Preparation

Extensive site preparation was needed to construct the foundations for the sima (pavilion) and dam. These included excavations by two back-hoes and an excavator after huge boulders that stood in the way had been blasted. A new survey was carried out after achieving the final hard, level surface suitable for supporting the sima and dam foundations. The results showed that we needed to replace our original design for an 8-foot (2438mm) high dam with an 11.5-foot (3505mm) one to give us the required pond size. Consequently, the design was modified to suit this new height.

To ensure safe and easy construction during heavy downpour, stream diversion was carried out by blasting through granite boulders upstream and channelling the water to an adjacent stream further to the east. The diversion was successfully completed with the result that little water flowed into the sima area during construction. A floodgate was later installed upstream to control flow of water into the pond.

However, during a heavy downpour in mid-September, we discovered that the sponsored floodgate was not waterproof. Attempts to firmly close the gate failed to prevent the gushing waters from flooding the dam because its outlet pipe was blocked by construction debris. Subsequently we supplemented the floodgate with a gravity weir and a spillway made of an 8-inch (200mm)-diameter pvc pipe with an elbow and adjustable section. Meanwhile Ah Leong and friends made artificial r.c. boulders to camouflage the wing wall next to the floodgate.

Work Procurement

Two methods of work procurement were considered. Method 1 was to tender out the work to a contractor who would be fully responsible for all aspects of work including the provision of the required materials and labour to complete the work satisfactorily. A local contractor was invited to submit a quotation. Method 2 was to subcontract out the labour with SBS providing the construction materials, logistics as well as the expertise for site co-ordination and supervision. A contractor was also requested to quote for this aspect of work.

It was found that Method 1 would cost us more than double the cost of Method 2. After careful consideration of existing potential capability within the SBS team, Method 2 was adopted. The advantages of adopting Method 2 were manifold such as major cost saving, control over quality and workmanship, and expeditious construction.

Construction

Construction of the sima and dam foundations was started on 20 June 2001 by a team of workers provided by Ransang Bina. The task of supervision and co-ordination was the responsibility of SBS site supervisor Mr. Lim Eng Keat, whose major tasks were to

1. ensure that construction was carried out according to drawings and specifications
2. ensure the adequate supply of materials on time
3. serve as a vital communication link, relaying site and construction problems to the engineer so that timely decisions could be made to facilitate and expedite successful construction.

With a team of dedicated workers under proper supervision, the construction of the dam and sima foundation proceeded with minimum hitches. There were several occasions when work was extended late into the night right up to the wee hours of the morning to meet construction deadlines. Thanks to SBS volunteers Lim Poh Eng and Ooi Teow Keat, food and drinks were provided to the overtime workers.

The dam and sima foundations have been successfully completed. A water control valve was installed at the bottom of the dam to allow for water drainage so that future cleaning and maintenance work can be carried out in dry conditions.

Construction of the sima superstructure was completed by another team of dedicated workers headed by Mr. Ooi Chee Pong (site supervisor) and Mr. Kew Yoke Pin (foreman) of Tong Hup Engineering Sdn. Bhd. The sima pavilion was completed just in time for SBS' first Kathina Ceremony on 18 November 2001. Landscaping will now follow to beautify the surroundings. It is envisaged that a waterfall will be created at the spot where the water overflows the dam and cascades down onto rock fill below.

• CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Behind a successful endeavour, there is always a team of hard working and dedicated individuals who generously contribute their time, effort and resources. In the construction of the water sima pavilion and dam, we would like to thank those mentioned above as well as those below for a job well done.

- Ms. Jade Saw—architect of the water sima pavilion
- Ir. Tan Buck Soon and Ir. Chung Chee Tuck—structural engineers for the sima pavilion
- Ir. Ng Kim Aik, Ir. Saw Say Kee, Ir. CK Wong—engineers who assisted in the design of the dam and sima pavilion foundation
- Mr. Teh and Mr. Chang of Ransang Bina who, despite hectic commitments, provided a team of dedicated labour for the construction of the dam and sima foundation at cost
- Mr. Ah Meng who obtained the necessary permits from the authorities and skilfully executed the blasts to prepare the site for construction
- Mr. Ooi Eng Huat for sourcing a floodgate design from Mr. Ong Seng Chuan who sponsored the floodgate
- Mr. Law Chong San of Merit Recognition who contributed the outlet valve and pipe for the dam
- Mr. Tan Guan Soon for sourcing and Ms. Teresa Jong for sponsoring belian shingles and hardwood timber materials from Sarawak
- Mr. Thomas Lim and his family and friends for arranging and sponsoring the transportation of the timber from Kuching to Taiping
- Mr. Tan Peng Khoon of Lee Yeat Plumbing Works for contributing plumbing materials. SBS

A Walk Through **Landscape and Orchard**

by Looi Sow Fei & Chen Sew Kian

For those of you who have not visited SBS to personally see its landscaping, now is the right time to walk you through its various stages of development from the very beginning.

Who better to take you on this walk than the one in charge of the landscape and orchard—the person who's been responsible for their well-being right from the beginning, Ms. Chen Sew Kian. Over to you, Ms. Chen.

"I still remember one day in January, 2000, when I climbed the hill up to Khemarama where Venerable Aggacitta was then residing. Accompanied by some members of TIMS' General Committee, I had my first discussion with him about the landscaping on SBS. I had armed myself with some beautifully illustrated books on various types of trees. Bhante Aggacitta wanted to choose some trees that would be suitable to plant as a screen at a prominent high point on SBS. This was my baptism of wood into the job of managing the landscape and orchard.

With a number of trees in mind, I went with Bhante, Ng Kian Chong and Goh Keat Soon to a commercial nursery to look for suitable saplings.

Finally it was decided to plant only *pulai* trees as they have a very nice shape and would serve efficiently as a screen when they are big enough.

At this juncture I began consultations with Chiu Sheng Bin, SBS consultant agronomist. He taught us how to plant and nurture the trees. From then on Sheng Bin has been making regular visits once every 2 or 3 months to check on our progress and tell us what to do next. Without him I'd be quite lost.

I next turned my attention to the durian orchard. Sheng Bin had recommended that we plant *Pueraria javanica*, a legume with a very luxuriant growth, as a cover crop for the durian orchard. So I bought the seeds and we planted them all over the orchard. Our efforts were well rewarded as you can see for yourself.

We employed Saw Kheng Hong as an orchard worker. He works under the guidance of Sheng Bin, who updates his work schedule every now and then to ensure that the durian trees are well and happy.

Soon, the durian trees were fruiting. Sheng Bin introduced a novel way of keeping the fruits pest-free without the use of pesticides. We bagged each fruit with recycled newspaper. Believe me, it was no easy task as you can see from the photo. The durians were high up and we had to use long poles to manipulate the bags to enclose each fruit. We suffered stiff necks and aching arms. The fruits turned out fabulous, though.

The durian trees being well and happy, my next task was to see to the setting up of a nursery to nurture a collection of plants in readiness for landscaping the areas around the various buildings which were coming up.

Plants were sourced from those who could spare us cuttings, bulbs, tubers and rhizomes. Sheng Bin also brought plants all the way from Kalimantan! Whenever he comes across an interesting plant, he would give it a new home in SBS. One of these is the *Theomatococcus danielli,* a sweetener plant that is 2000 times sweeter than sugar! He's just informed us that he's brought two *sal* saplings from Kushinagar to be adopted by SBS!

Planting of vertiver grass to control soil erosion on steep slopes was another area of concern. Sheng Bin brought the vertiver grass which has very deep and widespread roots and which is used along slopes of Malaysian highways. We planted this under his guidance.

On certain slopes other decorative plants have been planted. The very rewarding fruits of our labour can be seen on a slope near the site office where we planted over with a flowering creeper originally brought from Singapore.

We have also begun landscaping the areas around the buildings where construction work has been completed. Our durian trees are also frenziedly trying to keep up the pace. Don't you wish you were here? By the time you come to see for yourself, more landscaping would have been carried out.

All this has been achieved with the help of a band of workers comprising members of TIMS, supporters of SBS, and volunteer groups who come occasionally to help out. I would like to specially thank the group from Ipoh Buddha Dhamma Association, led by Ong Thean Kin that comes regularly to help out. Other groups and individuals have also come to offer us much needed manpower. Special thanks also to Chiu Sheng Bin whose guidance and advice have been our compass."

Sadhu to Ms. Chen and all those who have put in a lot of sweat and toil. ***SBS***

Rejoice!

All these strides in development could not have come about without your generous support in cash and kind.

SBS takes great pleasure in disclosing its financial standing so that you can rejoice in the meritorious deeds you have performed.

Total Donations Collected	RM 2,398,000
Project Cost :	
Phase 1 (incurred)	RM 1,009,108
Phase 2 (incurred)	RM 395,393
Phase 3 (budgeted	RM 642,340
Phase 4 (budgeted)	RM 720,000
Total	RM 2,766,841

We are happy to say that our development plans are being implemented successfully. With your continuing support, SBS is confident that it will eventually fulfill its vision of building a quality monk training centre that reflects a Malaysian Theravadin Buddhist identity.

Sending Out **Strong Signals**

SIGNAL GRASS and Seng are synonymous in SBS. Ng Poh Seng, or 'Ah Seng' as he is affectionately known to all associated with SBS, is a man of few words but his actions speak loudly for him. An epitome of the virtue of service, he's akin to the big boulders of SBS—strong, balanced and stable. Ah Seng helps to control erosion by using the terra-control method of seeding signal grass on erosion prone slopes. He spends a major portion of his free time doing voluntary work in SBS.

Lim Lay Hoon talks to **Ah Seng** to find out more about him and signal grass.

What is your typical day like?

I wake up at 5.30am daily. By 6.30am my push-cart stall is ready to begin my work of frying 'koay kak'at the Pokok Assam market. I'm usually home again by around noon. For two to three times a week, I spend the rest of the day making 'kueh kak' (rice flour cake).

How often do you go up to SBS to do voluntary work?

Whenever I'm free—which adds up to about 4-5 days a week.

What kind of work do you do in SBS?

My major responsibility is planting signal grass along the steep slopes of SBS. The complete process entails planting the seedlings, watering and fertilising them. Besides that, I help out wherever I can. I've helped to move boulders at the water supply source. Occasionally I've provided transport service on my motorcycle to those who are too tired to tackle the steep slopes of SBS.

What inspires you to spend so much of your time and energy for SBS?

I'm inspired by the Dhamma. I hope that SBS will be successful so that the Sasana will be prolonged. It is also only practical for locals like me to help. If SBS were located elsewhere, I wouldn't be helping even if I wanted to. Put it this way—I happen to be at the right place, at the right time.

The process of planting and tending to the signal grass is time-consuming and laborious. Do you have other volunteers helping out?

My brother, Ah Soon, helps me especially in the planting stage. In fact, he's invaluable when it comes to planting along the higher reaches of a slope. To do this, one has to use a long ladder. My brother, who has no fear of heights, can do the job well. Occasionally, my nephew, Tan Ban Leong, chips in as well.

What is the nature of the work involved in planting the grass?

First we have to prepare a formula of a mixture of grass seeds, soil and gum. Mixing them thoroughly in a wheelbarrow with a spade requires strong hands.

What do you do with this mixture?

We take a handful of the stuff and pinch out small blobs. We then take careful aim to target them onto the slope face. We throw them in such a way that they land in horizontal rows on the bare slope face and stick there because of the gum. The seeds will gradually sprout and cover the slope face with signal grass.

How do you tend to them to ensure they grow healthily?

Watering and fertilising the seedlings are tedious chores. Both involve manually splashing buckets of water and fertiliser mixture onto the slopes. I personally supervise these tasks, as I want to ensure every seed is nourished. Since I have been given the responsibility, I make sure I do a good job. Fertilising the grass is a dirty and stinking job. As I splash the 'aromatic' mixture of chicken droppings and NPK (nitrogen, phospate & potassium) onto the slopes, some of it inevitably shower us with not so blessed water!

Your labour of love is bearing fruit. Are you elated when you see the signal grass you planted thriving and blanketing the slopes with lush greenery?

No. It's a job I do like any other, without any expectations. My feelings are neutral.

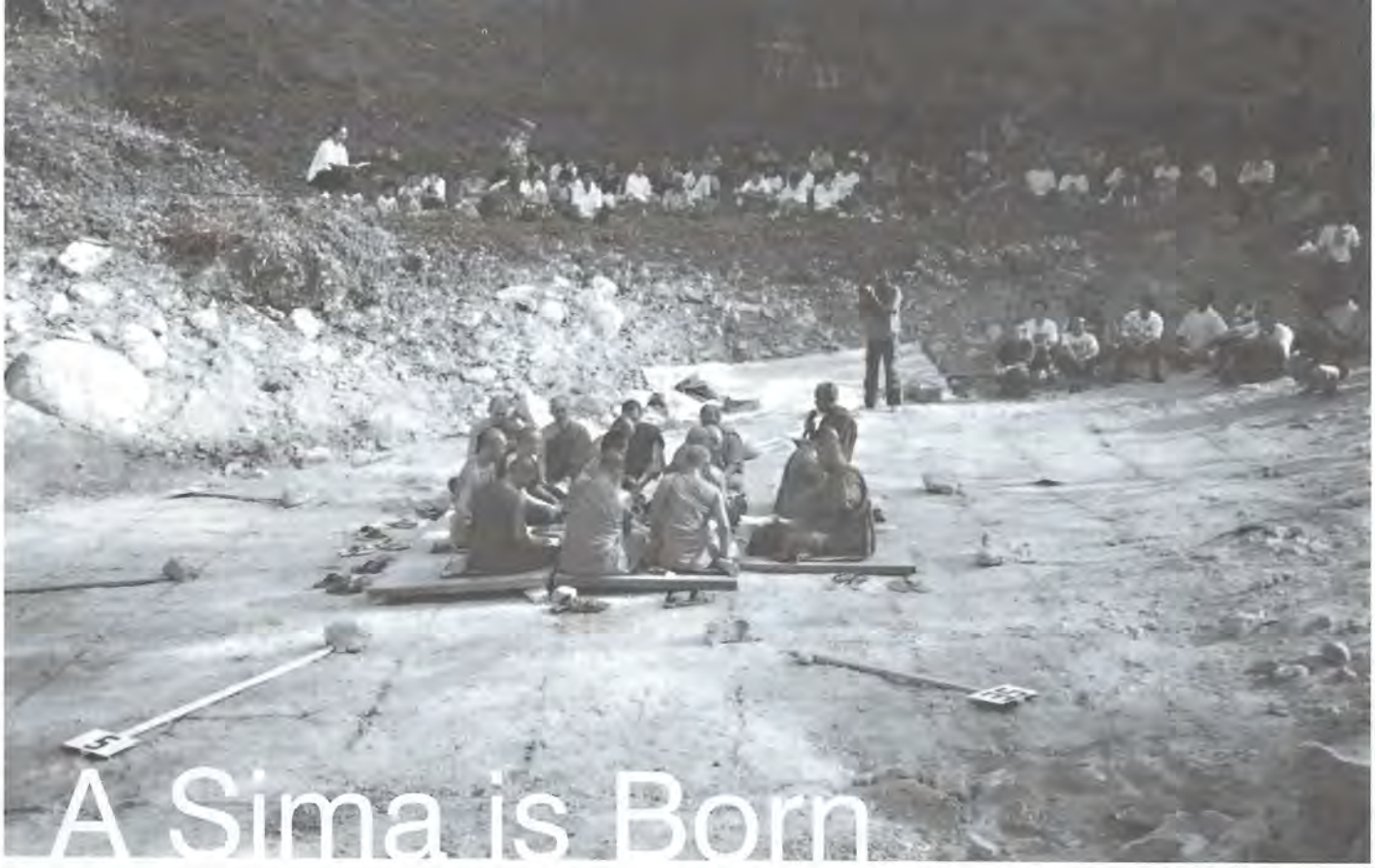
How, do you think, has your involvement with SBS benefitted you?

I've learnt a new skill! Without being aware of it I've become quite an 'expert' at planting signal grass having done so much planting on a good number of slopes. Mr. KL Khor* is the real expert, though. He taught me the techniques of planting and caring for the grass.

So those of you visiting SBS, do look for those grassy slopes with clumps of green, green grass swaying in the wind and remember the time and energy that have been spent to give you such a visual treat. *SBS*

"It's a job I do like any other, without any expectations. My feelings are neutral."

***KL Khor** is an expert on erosion control, one of a group of volunteer advisers for SBS. He is the boss of Terra Control Sdn. Bhd., a company specialising in erosion control systems—the planting of vegetation under varying conditions to control erosion. According to him, signal grass has roots that grow deep and wide, thus suitable for erosion control on slopes. He had to modify the technique of terra-control to adapt it to the steep terrain of SBS and also sponsored the grass seeds which is imported from Australia. He visits every now and then to check on the progress of the grass with which he is very happy.



A Sima is Born

Hundreds of devotees from all over Malaysia flock to witness a rare event that happens only once, if ever, in a Buddhist monastery. TJ Tan presents an overview of the momentous occasion.

The chanting was brisk and silence descended upon the assembly of devotees as the ceremony began among forested hills near Taiping. The monks had positioned themselves in formation on the grid squares marked on the floor of the area specially excavated to form a basin with gently sloping sides.

"Whatever spirits have gathered here—whether terrestrial or celestial—may you all be happy and listen intently to my words. Thus, spirits, you should all be attentive. Show kindness to human beings. Day and night they bring offerings. So protect them heedfully," the monks, led by the Abbot, Ven. Aggacitta, chanted in the bright sunshine.

As I sat listening to the chanting, Looi Sow Fei, a member of the organising committee of today's ceremony, whispered to me, "There seems to be a casualty among the monks. There were 17 monks yesterday." She added proudly, "The monks are all Malaysians who have come from all over Malaysia."

Together with the rest of the devotees assembled on the slopes above the site on the Sunday morning of 1 July 2001, looking down onto the spot where the monks were assembled, I witnessed the making of a new sima. The one-hour event is amongst the most important of ceremonies in Buddhist tradition. The sima is where formal monastic acts (*sanghakamma*) are performed; such as the ordination of bhikkhus, awarding the kathina cloth to a deserving bhikkhu and the appointment of monastic office-bearers. During Ven. Aggacitta's talk on 'The Significance of a Sima' after the sima was declared, he likened a sima to a parliament house.

The day before, a tedious process of monastic acts was performed by the same group of monks to remove former simas that could have possibly stood on the same area on the lovely hilltop site. The ceremony began just after daybreak and ended in the evening, with breaks in between. Ven. Ujukata from Penang had fallen ill in the hot sun and the chanting had to proceed without him. Taiping, arguably the wettest town in Malaysia, was suffering from a hot spell and had been without rain for more than a month.

Yesterday's ceremony prepared the ground for today's ceremony to declare a new sima in SBS. The sima at SBS is made on an excavated site that will eventually be flooded. A six-meter octagonal sima pavilion will sit above the pond.

Tan Joo Lan, a video producer who was here to record the weekend ceremony, relished the chance to witness the rare event. "It's a new experience for me. It's the first time I'm seeing it," she said enthusiastically. Declaring a new sima usually happens only once, if ever, in a Buddhist monastery. The ceremony at SBS was even rarer, as the participating monks were all Malaysians. Joo Lan and her team had produced a video about the creation of SBS titled 'Shaping the Future Now'. She plans to come out with a sequel to this which will include clips of today's ceremony. With Buddhist flags strung out along the steep and winding concretised roads, SBS looked very festive and the crowd cheerful on that Sunday. Many of the 500-odd devotees who had gathered here have contributed to the SBS building fund. "People are definitely enthusiastic about Malaysia's first Theravada monk training centre. Many are of the opinion that it is long overdue," said Lim Lay Hoon, the organising secretary of this event. Devotees had flocked here from Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Johor Baru, providing brisk business for the hotels in this little town.

Sasanarakkha, as what the sima is named, means 'Guardian of the Buddha's Teaching'. The affable Ven. Aggacitta said it was his fervent hope that Sasanarakkha Sima would live up to its name, thus benefiting the devotees and their descendants. SBS

Demarcation and Declaration of Sasanarakkha Sima

Lim Suan Har gives us a very close look at the intricacies of the ceremonies conducted over the two days. She also gives us an idea of some of the very strict requirements that have to be fulfilled in the making of a sima.

The air was fresh and the morning bright as we ambled downhill towards the lower valley of Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary after offering breakfast to the seventeen Sangha members. It was early dawn and the sun was just rising against a backdrop of clear blue sky, with the promise of a beautiful day. We were gathered there to witness the demarcation and declaration of a sima, which is a space within a boundary likened to a parliament house for Buddhist monks.

A newly constructed concrete road had replaced the rutted laterite track of my last visit. The road, a grey snake meandering through the greenery of the surrounding hills, wound its way down to the site for the sima.

Formerly, a small stream flowed through the site. The water had been diverted so that the site could be excavated. It then looked like a big basin, standing out bare against the green background. The floor of the basin was clearly marked out in one-metre squares forming 136 squares in all. At the western and lowest end of the site stood a dam, which will create a pond when the stream is channelled back again. It is in the middle of this pond that a sima pavilion will be built.

We sat around the rim of the basin looking down onto the area that had been marked, assured of a bird's eye-view of the ceremony.

At 8.15am the monks, led by Ven. Aggacitta, the founding Abbot of Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary, walked in single file into the designated area. Ven. Aggacitta took up position right in the middle while the other monks stood in two rows behind him. The ceremony began with the invitation to the *devas* to listen to the Dhamma, followed by the chanting of selected *parittas* (verses of protection). When it ended the monks took a short break.

Then, the monks positioned themselves in the first two rows of squares at the north end of the marked out area. It was time to go through a monastic act, by reciting formulated Pali texts, to remove old simas that had possibly stood on this site in the past. Otherwise, any attempts to make the new sima would be invalid.

I found out later that there were mandatory rules in the declaration of a sima. One very strict rule is that all Theravadin monks in the area (in this case the mukim of Tupai, minus the portion overlapping the Taiping municipality) must take part in its execution. If a monk is unable to do so, his consent must be obtained for the ceremony to go on. This includes a monk who happens to be passing through the area when the act is in progress. Interestingly enough, the regular passenger train service that passes through this area each morning was suspended since a few days ago for the purpose of a major upgrade.

The monks recited simultaneously. After about four minutes of recitation, the monks advanced towards the south direction, and recited the same thing again on a new set of squares. This went on until they had finally covered all the squares. Although all the monks were in position, only alternate monks chanted at any one time. This was so as to give each monk a rest between rounds of chanting.

At five-thirty in the evening, another round of recitation was done. The procedure was the same, except that they started in the east and moved westwards. This was to make doubly sure that no spot was left uncovered. That brought an end to the work for the day.

A New Sima Sprouts on Earth

Very much like a story about Hobbitland and Middle Earth, Lee Yu Ban paints you an impressionistic picture of the Sima Declaration Ceremony held on 1 July 2001.

I often travel along the North-South Highway and on these trips I'm always aware of the vast expanse of undeveloped land between south Kedah and the town of Rawang. Around Ipoh, the country is particularly beautiful with towering mountains of thick, dark forests. Often, I've caught myself wondering what secrets lie within these forested mountains—magical pools? ancient caves? exotic herbs? I imagined that there must lie sheltered within these silent hills, as in a fantasy movie, things rare and precious as jewels, unblemished by the hand of modern Man.

I bore witness to a miraculous birth of one such rarity one Sunday. It was 1 July 2001. In the land by the magical name of Sasanarakkha, known only to a small community, a small band of monks belonging to one of the oldest religious orders had gathered the day before.

On that day they had performed a daylong ceremony to pave the way for the age-old rituals which would take place today. That night, they had studied, discussed and silently rehearsed the intricacies of the ritual required of them the following day.

Early the next morning, the monks made their way down the hill to a hidden valley surrounded by orchards and forests. One by one the monks, clad in robes of varying shades of ochre and brown, took their places on the ground. The site where the ritual would be performed had been neatly marked. It was once the bottom of a bubbling creek until the water upstream was diverted. Now the creek bed was dry.

1 July 2001 dawned bright and clear as the previous day. It was the day of the actual Sima Demarcation and Declaration Ceremony. A large crowd of devotees began to gather. Whereas the ceremony on the previous day was not officially publicised (hence the small number of lay witnesses), today's ceremony had devotees coming from all over Malaysia as well as some from Singapore and Australia. All had gathered to witness this historic ceremony.

The actual area to be occupied by the proposed sima pavilion had been marked out by eight large stones the size of footballs placed at the corners of an invisible octagon within the area that had been removed of possible old simas the previous day. These boundary-marking stones, also known as *nimittas*, marked the eight major compass directions. The large crowd had assembled on the rim of the basin.

At 8.30am, sixteen monks marched down to the middle of the basin and seated themselves on a wooden platform placed within the circle of stones. YB Dato' Ho Cheng Wang, a member of the Perak State Executive Committee and a patron of the Sanctuary, was introduced to the assembly by Wai Seng Moh who acted as MC for the day. The MC gave a speech on the aims of the Sanctuary and the efforts of all those who were involved in its founding and development to date.

After that, the monks began their chanting with an invitation to the *devas*, followed by selected *parittas*. The Sima Demarcation and Declaration Ceremony had begun. Then came the announcing of the *nimittas*. Placards naming the direction of each *nimitta* were held up. Each person holding a placard would announce his stone in response to a question by the monk conducting the proceedings, who moved round in a circle from one stone to another in a clockwise direction beginning with the marker in the east, until all the marker stones had been announced

This was repeated in five rounds. The first two rounds involved only the monks, and were conducted in Pali. The next three rounds involved the lay devotees, mainly those who had played significant roles in the founding and maintenance of SBS. The third and fourth rounds were conducted in English.

The final round was different in that it was conducted in the Hokkien dialect. A small group of devotees stood at each corner of the octagon. Whenever the monk asked for the identification of the nimitta, each group would answer with a shout of "Cheok, Bhante!" ("Rock, Bhante'). That brought shouts of laughter. I suddenly felt a surge of joy within me that brought tears to my eyes. To me, it was a meaningful and moving ceremony.

This set the stage for the actual declaration of Sasanarakkha Sima. Ven. Aggacitta proposed to the participating monks that the area be made a sima and asked if there were any objections. Silence is consent.

"It is pleasing to the Sangha, therefore it is silent; thus do I understand." This was followed by cries of "Long live the Sasana" With these words, a sima was established.

My joy seemed to be shared by the whole crowd and I felt that many treaded joyously and lightly up the challenging road to the pindapata area.

On the site, the new sima pavilion will be built. It will be an octagonal building crowned by a stupa of a Malaysian design, standing in a pond formed by the flooding of the basin—a sima on water. SBS

The ritual would be witnessed by a number of people from across the country but would generally pass unknown to the world.

At 9.30am an ancient invocation was initiated by the leader of the band of monks, a thin ascetic by the name of Venerable Aggacitta. He started by asking for the blessings of the Three Jewels. Then in a strong and powerful voice, he started a recitation of special suttas known as *parittas* in Pali, an ancient language. These suttas are known among the faithful for their efficacy in subduing forces of evil and attracting good. Upon completion of the recitation, the ascetic monk called for the protection of devas over the site and surrounding hills and forests.

The special ritual was then performed by the band of monks in accordance with traditional rites laid out thousands of years before. The monks took their positions along the perimeter of the site, marked and identified by large stones in the eight major directions of the compass. Ven.Aggacitta then approached and questioned each of the monks, who were required to declare the boundary. This was conducted in two rounds in the Pali language, among the monks. Next followed another three rounds in which laymen participated, declaring the boundary twice in English and once in Hokkien.

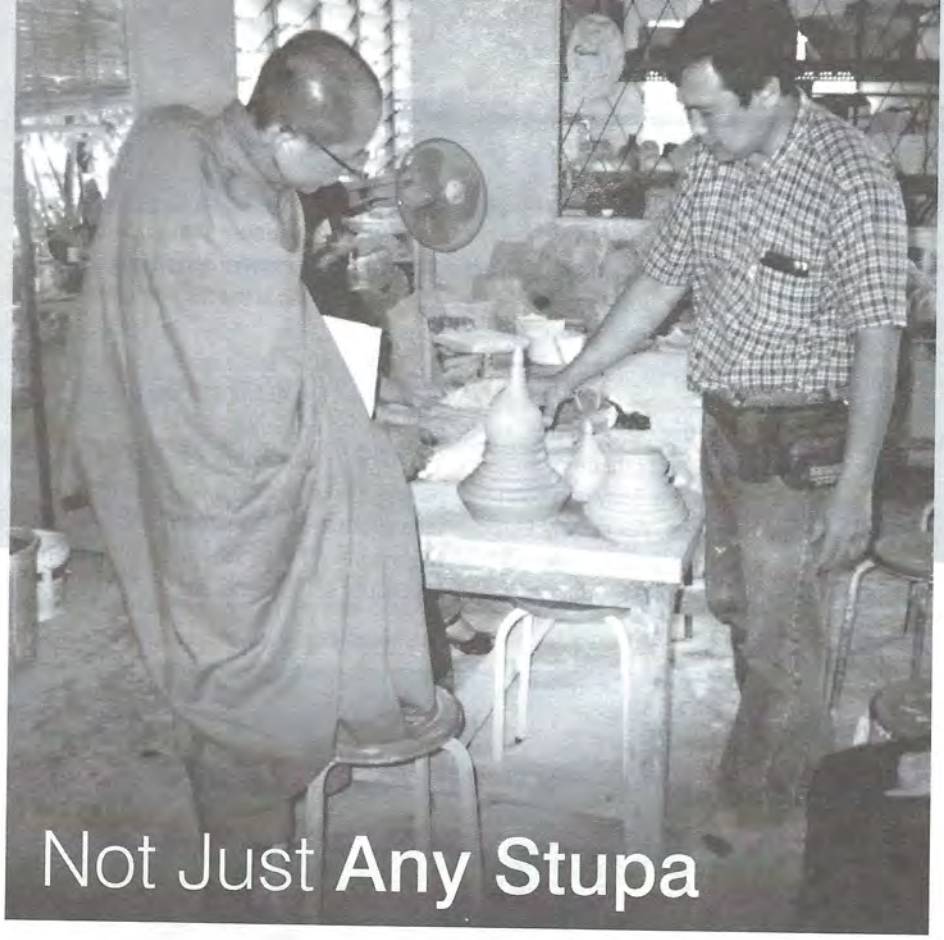
At the end of the ritual a loud cry of "Long live the Sasana" echoed in the air. In this valley deep in the hills, a sima had been established. Nestled in the folds of the earth, a womb had been created.

This is where new monks belonging to this ancient order shall be born, stepping out into a brotherhood known as the Bhikkhu Sangha. Twice a month, on nights when the moon starts its lunar cycle and when it is full, the monks will also gather in this sima to recite the rules of their Order and to reinforce the purity of their conduct.

With the establishment of the sima, the singular purpose of the morning's congregation had been achieved. The monks and those who had borne witness to the ceremony began to disperse, each holding onto the vision that monks emerging from Sasanarakkha Sima shall carry aloft the torch of the Bhikkhu Sangha, spreading the teachings of compassion and wisdom to the far corners of this land.

And the next time I travel along the North South Highway, I shall glance to the side and smile, for I know that hidden in the dark forests and green hills, lies a treasure throve that few know of, but I have been privy to its birth and its coming. And I smile, for I believe that in the not so distant future, I shall recognise the gems that shall come forth from there. SBS

Note: The band of monks comprised Ven. Aggacitta, Ven. Uttara, Ven. Kusala, Ven. Pasannacitta, Ven. Khantika, Ven. Tisara, Ven. Vijitha, Ven. Dhammavuddho, Ven. Vayamo, Ven. Mahañano, Ven. Cattamalo, Ven. Santacitto, Ven. Samyamo, Ven. Ujukata, Ven. Tejadhamma, Ven. Kumara and Ven. Jutipanno.



The miniature prototype stupa (below) was created by Mr. Cheah Yeow Seng, a ceramics lecturer from the Kuala Lumpur College of Arts. He discusses details with Ven. Aggacitta during the preliminary stage of design (left).

Not Just **Any Stupa**

A stupa that's distinctly Malaysia in flair and flavour was installed to crown the sima pavillion. Ven. Kumara Bhikkhu relates the circumstances of the installation.

Today, 11 October 2001 shall go down in the annals of Sasanarakkha Buddhist Sanctuary as another day of great significance. Here, a stupa was installed: not just any stupa, but one that is distinctively Malaysian in spirit and flavour. You could call it a Malaysian stupa, as it was designed in Malaysia by Malaysians, and you would certainly not be able to find anything like it anywhere in the world.

The bronze stupa had arrived at the Abbot's Office from Bangkok just yesterday night. The casting was jointly sponsored by Mrs. AK Wong of Bandar Utama Buddhist Society, Hor Tuck Loon of Sukhi Hotu, his wife, Chan Lai Fun and their friends. Mrs. Wong also sponsored the cost of making the miniature prototype stupa, whereas Lim Poh Chuan and his wife, Grace, who is a member of Taiping Insight Meditation Society, made the arrangements to have the actual stupa cast in Bangkok and transported here.

A few days before the arrival of the stupa, there were concerns about it not arriving in time for the appointed date. Poh Chuan's telegraphic transfer took much longer than he expected to reach the maker, who would not release the stupa until the money actually reached his hands. Personally, I was sceptical of it reaching on time. It's okay, I thought. In fact, what's the big deal? We could easily postpone the ceremony, which wasn't widely publicised anyway.

However, Ven. Aggacitta insisted that the chosen date was "a good day". An idea spontaneously came to him. He asked that the help of Tan Bee Chin be sought, knowing that she had some affluent contacts in Bangkok who could help. And he was right. The money was quickly paid, the stupa was soon on its way to the Sanctuary, and I stood corrected. It must have been a very good day.

The fact that the stupa was safely in the Sanctuary didn't mean that we could just fix it on the roof of the sima pavilion. Another step of preparation was necessary. This was to saw a piece of hardwood into an octagonal shape that could fit exactly inside the base of the stupa, so that it could be firmly secured onto the roof.

We had the piece of wood, but we didn't have much time. The ceremony was scheduled for about 2.30pm that afternoon. Again, this was no obstacle. All it took was to have Tan Chong Sim, who has been a helpful supporter, to give a call to his friend, the boss of Soon Lek Furniture. He responded to our call. It was amazing that the boss willingly got it done at such short notice, and just in time for the stupa installation ceremony. Why not? It was a good day.

The piece of hardwood was certainly no less extraordinary. It was sawn from a block of *belian*, which is reputed to be the hardest

species of wood in the world, gladly sponsored by Teresa Jong of Sarawak. The hardwood is so hard that it is naturally immune to termite attacks. I was told that such a block of *belian* is rare due to its larger than usual width. Furthermore, it was a family heirloom given to Teresa by her father. The woodblock had been earlier transported from Sarawak together with sawn timber, also sponsored by Teresa, meant as building material for the sima pavilion.

As the event was not widely publicised, the crowd was expectedly small—just about 50-70 people, mostly members of local Buddhist groups. They had obviously been informed merely by word of mouth.

Placing the stupa on the apex of the sima pavilion roof was not an easy task as the roof was somewhat steep and the stupa about the weight of an average man: a hefty 58 kilogram. Neither was there any sort of machine to lift it up. It took the sheer human strength of devotees and construction workers—powered by devotion—to haul it in relay fashion up the roof and position it at the apex. A Herculean task indeed!

Relics believed to be that of our Lord Buddha, his great disciples, and other arahants were placed inside the stupa. They had been given by various devotees, particularly Lim Tian Woh of Klang, who went to various places to collect them. Besides that, devotees also placed crystals and other cherished items in it, thereby adding further weight to the already heavy stupa.

While the stupa was being secured on the top of the sima pavilion, the monks, led by the Abbot, Ven. Aggacitta Bhikkhu, chanted a series of Pali verses specially selected for the occasion. As a mark of respect for the Buddha's words, the devotees removed their footwear.

While the monks chanted, a feathery drizzle descended from the sky, as if to bathe the newly installed Malaysian stupa. Thoughtful devotees shaded the monks with umbrellas. It's interesting to note that such a kind of drizzle had happened once before, that is, after the chanting at the SBS groundbreaking ceremony.

The simple but significant ceremony ended with the Abbot leading the gathering in a sharing of merits.

Another landmark for SBS has been reached; another step towards its vision firmly taken; another piece of groundwork for a Malaysian Theravada Buddhist identity beautifully set in place. **SBS**

IMPRESSIONS

SIMA DEMARCATION & KATHINA

Young and old who kept track of the two major events of Y2001 share their impressions and comments.

Uncle Ah Eng drove us up in the Ford Ranger at about 5.30am. There were too many people in front so we sat at the back. It was fun. It was very cool at the hilltop.

There were 17 monks there. They were ready for breakfast pindapata.

The SBS puppies, Tommy and U Tan, were there too. They were cute and chubby. They were with the monks when we saw them.

While the monks were chanting I ran up and down the hill. It was fun.

On 1 July I woke up earlier as I wanted to be there early. I rode another 4WD up. It was a Suzuki. When I reached the hilltop, I ran up to the dana centre. There were many people. I played with Yasa and Yun Wen. After pindapata, I went to the sima area. There were many people there. I looked for a shady place to sit on. This time I promised myself not to run up and down again, but to listen to the monks' chanting.

After the chanting, I went up to the first kuti. I nearly fell. Luckily a helpful St. John Ambulance member helped me. I ran up to the information centre to help sell T-shirts.

After lunch, we went home at 1.30pm.

Lim Sze Wei (aged 11)

On 1 July, I went to the grand demarcation of the sima. I woke up at 4.00am We sat in a Ford Ranger that was blue in colour up to SBS. The road was very long and winding. When we reached, the sky was still very dark. Yun Wen and I had our breakfast in the back of the Ford Ranger. The scenery up there was beautiful.

There were many monks there. One of the dogs, Tommy, joined in the chanting.

Lim Chong Ren (aged 10)

At 12.30pm, we were ready to go down but there was no driver or 4WD, so Sze Wei's father said we had to walk down but Sze Wei said she didn't want to. So Ko Kyi rode the SBS motor-cycle to take just Sze Wei and me down.

Wai Yun Wen (aged 11)

Undoubtedly, the sima demarcation ceremony was one of the most well-organised occasions Angie and I have ever been to:

- routing of devotees was well taken care of by the convoy of efficient and careful drivers of 4WDs
- even the teeniest detail was taken care of—road maps leading to the SBS foothill were available at the hotel reception counter
- there were countless expressions of joy at the wonderful spread of food

The people behind the scenes i.e. the organising committee deserve all the merits for their brilliant coordination and perfect teamwork. But of course, all this would not have been possible without the guidance of Ven. Aggacitta, who indeed has proven himself to be equally adept at managing both worldly and spiritual affairs.

Thomas Kusala

We decided to walk up the hill as there were too many people waiting for the 'SBS Bus'. Along the way, we realised there were many also walking energetically up, which made us feel much lighter. Many 'SBS Buses' passed us driving up and down to make many trips to bring the devotees uphill. I felt respect for the drivers who drove up and down without complaining, looking very happy to perform their job.

We arrived at the hilltop at about 9.00am and the ceremony had just begun. Devotees were standing or sitting on the slopes—just like a small stadium watching an exciting football match.

Allan Koh

It was well-organised and I must say we are impressed with the number of helpers and volunteers.

Ooi Siew Swan

It was an edifying experience for me.

Tan Joo Lan

Kathina at SBS on 18 Nov was a great success and adventure for us. *Sadhu* for the great effort, care and concern taken to ensure everybody's well-being, and for the big smiles and the sprightly spirits even from the elderly. Everybody was a picture of enthusiasm and pride and raring to help. I feel so touched and the impression is forever imprinted in my mind. Best of all was the Dhamma talk.

Leslie Guoh

Sadhu to the committee for working so hard to achieve such a commendable show of support. The event was certainly well-organised and I would say all of us had our share of joy for the occasion. The weather played its part as well.

Lim Hee Chay

SBS is very lucky to have such a group of very dedicated workers. Would it be possible to involve students in the running of such big events? They are the seeds of future leaders of our Buddhist organisations. This is what I see in Mahayana functions.

The Kathina event was simple, and this did fit into the natural surroundings. For a small group to organise a national level event is something of an achievement. We do feel that we cannot ask for anything more, other than what you all have provided. Sadhu to all of you.

Lim Tai Eng

I am very much impressed by the office of the SBS abbot as well as that of the Kathina organising committee. All in all I have received 4 notifications on the visitor information. Wow! That's what I call maximum overdrive performance. Believe me, they are all tall orders. There is too much confusion over just one decree though.

Tan Guan Soon

Shaping The **Future Now** Part II

Tan Joo Lan, our video producer, tells you of her visits to 'shoot' footage for her next video production on SBS.

Following the current practice of movies and their sequels, the chronicling of SBS is to continue in a sequel, *Shaping The Future Now Part II.*

After our first recording and subsequent issue of *Shaping The Future Now*—a VCD on *why* SBS was conceptualized and *how* it was launched, we now move on to record the *what*—what developments have taken place since then. We also plan to show you more of the *how*—how the members and lay devotees involved in the progressive development of the site contribute their time and effort in their different but significant ways.

Our plan is to gather video footage of the *what* and the *how* of SBS development and then put them together in a second video at year's end or after the official opening ceremony.

The first event we put on tape was the ceremony for the demarcation and declaration of Sasanarakkha Sima held on 30 June and 1 July 2001.

We arrived at Taiping in the late afternoon of Friday, 29 June. After checking in at the hotel, we went to the premises of TIMS to catch a 4WD up to the site to see in advance what would be happening on 30 June and 1 July. Since the cameras could handle the waning light, we covered the arrival of those monks who were arriving late. Fifteen monks from different centres and monasteries in Kedah, Penang, Perak, Selangor, Johor and Sarawak had been invited to participate in the 2-day long ceremony. Joining them would be Ven. Aggacitta, the abbot of SBS, and Ven. Kumara, its first resident monk.

We were told that Saturday, 30 June was the ceremony when the monks chant Pali verses to abolish former simas that could possibly have existed on this site. Sunday, 1 July, would be the actual demarcation and declaration ceremony.

We woke before dawn on Saturday morning to catch the first in a series of to-s and fro-s of a number of 4WDs plying the hill to the top and down. After shooting the morning dana, we quickly went down to the water sima site to get a vantage point for the cameras worked by Bala and Soo Jin. It was intriguing to see the monks slowly cover every square foot of the space to thoroughly "cleanse" the site. We waited to see how the monks would maintain their balance on the sloping area covered with loose stones and pebbles. They solved the problem by each squatting in his allocated square of ground. In order to thoroughly cover every inch, the monks "cleansed" the area twice—once in the morning and again in the afternoon—standing in three different formations while they were chanting.

We covered the morning session and returned at night to video the discussion on controversial issues about water sima. These included identification of sima boundaries, types of allowable boundary markers, maximum extent of the sima and times for chanting—based on references from the Vinaya books. The discussion was conducted in English and Hokkien.

1 July was the demarcation ceremony. Members of the Buddhist community from all over Malaysia were here. There were also a number from Singapore and Australia. It was a heart-warming scene—old people, young people, men, women and children had come to witness the event. Lay people, members of the SBS committee and the professionals who had contributed and are contributing their skills and expertise in the physical development of the sanctuary, also participated. They were positioned around an octagonal area marked out with stones to establish the 8 major compass directions, within the area that had been "cleansed" during the previous day's ceremony. In reply to a question by the monk conducting the ceremony, each replied that the boundary marker for his direction was a rock.

When lunch was over droves of people queued up to be ferried down in the 4WDs. We owed our mobility to Ah Eng and the very well-organized transportation committee.

We were impressed to see that the overgrown paths leading to the water sima site had become neat, cemented little roads, lined with lush grassy green banks. However a number of hairpin bends and the very steep gradient made plying back and forth a huffing and puffing affair. Kudos to the TIMS members and other volunteers who, in the early days, trudged up and down all over SBS without a joint out of order.

The existence of the green grass banks has a little story to itself (see p.14). When you next walk the steep paths of SBS and enjoy the sight of lush grass-covered slopes, remember the days of toil and dedication of Ah Seng and Ah Soon.

To capture Ah Seng and his brother at their task on video, we made another trip to Taiping on 13 August 2001. Before going up to SBS we wanted to put into the can an establishing shot—of SBS taken from afar. For that, we went up first to Khemarama, Ven. Aggacitta's former dwelling on another small hill. As usual, Ah Eng ferried us up. It was cloudy and a haze hung over the valley. We waited for the sun to come out. We taped down a few seconds even though the sun did not come out. We would have to return for another attempt to get a good shot.

As we prepared to return to the 4WD, we smelt the aroma of... aha... durians! While we had been busy filming, Ah Eng had been busy durian hunting and had collected some fallen ones. They were very good! Sow Fei claimed with feeling that the orange flesh of a particular fruit that delivered a rich, creamy texture was the best she had ever had.

The next day, after covering the *pindapata* at the Spritzer Mineral Water Factory, we went up to SBS. We noted that the steps leading up to the Abbot's vihara have been cemented over. The steel structure of the sima pavilion was up. Four kutis are on their way to being completed. Venerable Kumara has a set of duties to carry out every morning. Venerable Kusala from Kuching and Venerable Mahañano from Penang are at SBS for the *vassa*.

We covered Venerable Aggacitta at the sima site discussing work in progress with Lim Eng Keat, site supervisor for SBS and Ooi Chee Pong, site supervisor for Tong Hup Engineering Bhd, the contractor. Venerable Kumara allowed us to shoot him at his morning duties. We also shot Ah Seng, Ah Soon and Ah Leong in action. We tried our hand at hurling some handfuls of the gooey mixture.

We were satisfied with the footage we had in the can, and even more satisfied when another lot of durians that had been collected was opened. Ah, another taste of the marvellous durians, this time from SBS!

Unless we know of other happenings, the next time we go up would be to cover the Kathina on 18 November. ***SBS***

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Special thanks to Tan Guan Soon for his most helpful comments and suggestions and to YKL Print for their exceptional printing service.

Layout and Design Sukhi Hotu (Hor Tuck Loon)

This issue is sponsored by Sukhi Hotu Dhamma Publication.

Who's Next?

WE NEED YOU

as General Administrator

We're particularly hopeful that we can get one soon, because without one the monks here have little choice but to get involved in administrative matters. Otherwise, it's difficult to get things done.

Job description:
A full-time live-in general administrator who co-ordinates and administers matters relating to the physical management of SBS including the support of the monastic community.

Requirements:
- Male, below 65 of age, sufficiently fit and health Fair mastery of oral and written English
- Conversant in Mandarin, Hokkien or Cantonese
- Administrative and clerical skills (documentation, inventory control)
- PC-literate (especially word processing, email, etc.)
- Willing to observe the 5 precepts plus celibacy while staying in SBS
- Pleasant and positive in attitude
- Valid Class B & D driving license preferable

Benefits:
- Blessings of the Triple Gem, including spiritual guidance.
- Free lodging in SBS, with lots of fresh air and a conducive environment for meditation
- Free food
- Medical benefits.
- Personal accident group insurance policy
- Special allowances if necessary

Remuneration:
Monthly pay of about RM1000 depending on qualifications, with EPF and SOCSO.

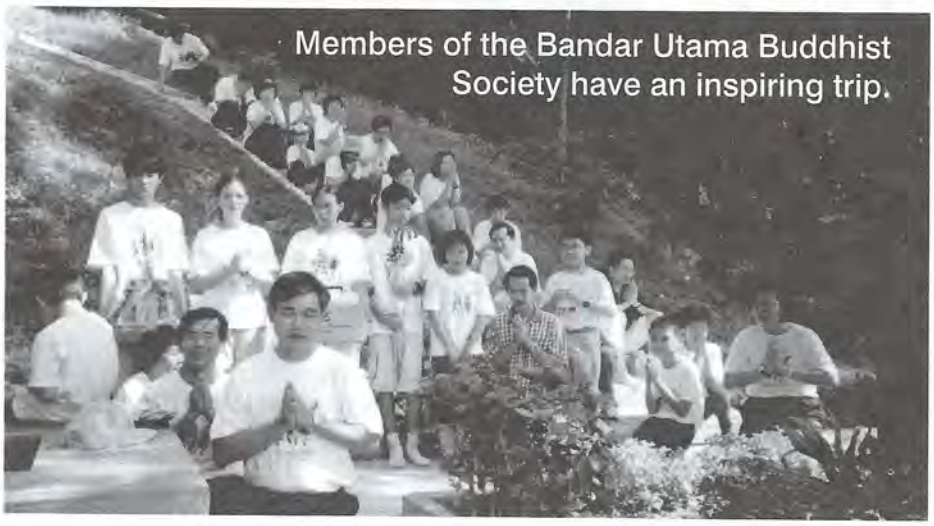
If interested, you may obtain more information by contacting:

SBS Administration Manager
c/o 96, Jln 4
Tmn Bersatu, Kg Boyan
34000 Taiping, PERAK
t/f 05 8052977
e sbsmail@pd.jaring.my

Hope we can get a capable GA soon so that the SBS monks can be freer from worldly tasks and pay more attention to their monkish duties.

Red Carpet Rolled Out For BUBS

by Lim Kim See



Members of the Bandar Utama Buddhist Society have an inspiring trip.

Saturday, 20 October 2001 was an exciting day for 149 members of BUBS. On arrival in Taiping our very kind friends from TIMS ferried us up to SBS in 4WDs—all 3 busloads of us!

All were impressed and excited with the developments in SBS. Its serene ambience (makes one turn down the volume and talk in softer tones!) and the vista of Taiping town in the distance were no less impressive.

Venerable Aggacitta gave a Dhamma talk on 'The Benefits of Saving Lives' prior to our setting free some birds. The experience was beneficial to both old and young, especially first-timers.

After the talk, some adults and children were taken on a guided tour, while the rest set about their scheduled task of helping to landscape an area near the site office.

Rain descended upon everybody and we re-assembled under the canopies for refreshments and sumptuous nonya kuih, etc. so thoughtfully laid out by our TIMS friends. During tea, some of us had the privilege to talk to Ven. Aggacitta, before we made the descent to our buses. The energetic ones walked down while the rest rode the 4WDs.

We had an informal and boisterous dinner with TIMS members. The easy camaraderie and goodwill among the group was much in evidence—a big happy family, indeed.

Early next morning saw us up at SBS again participating in *pindapata*. For many of us it was a new experience. We found it quite awe-inspiring, an occasion to be remembered for a long time.

Ven. Aggacitta then gave a Dhamma talk on 'The 4 Qualities for Social Integration and Harmony' which was most meaningful to us in our daily interaction with others. That was food for some profound thought. This was followed by our President, Buck Soon, sharing his thoughts with us after which we presented a donation to SBS and requisites to the monks

When the signal for lunch came, our members were ready! Once again, we were overwhelmed by the culinary skills and hospitality of the TIMS team of ladies who had worked hard that morning. Some of us asked if we could enrol for cookery classes!

All too soon, it was time to help tidy and pack up to leave SBS. On the way down, we stopped at the waterfall for the children to have some fun. And fun they had judging by their wet clothes when they finally responded to the call to make tracks for the buses waiting at the foothill.

All agreed it had been a very enjoyable weekend, and the visit to SBS was the highlight of the trip.

We extend our grateful appreciation to the SBS Sangha and members of TIMS. Without exception, they made us feel so welcome with their enthusiasm long before we actually arrived in Taiping. *Sadhu, Sadhu, Sadhu.* **SBS**

"Pick a suitable date and decide on the place—either TIMS or SBS." Ven. Aggacitta's phone call confirmed a pleasant surprise that I got from Chen Sew Kian. She had recently told me that Bhante was suggesting a one-week meditation retreat for SBS helpers at the end of the year. After a month-long meditation retreat conducted at TIMS in December 1999, Bhante had said, "This would be the first and last retreat I'm going to conduct." So, what a surprise!

Immediately after the Kathina Ceremony, an ad-hoc organising committee was formed to plan for the retreat. Ng Kian Chong, whose second home is now SBS, strongly proposed SBS as the venue although many of us were initially quite doubtful as to its suitability, mainly because the multi-purpose hall (MPH) and guest lodges, meant for retreat purpose, have not been built. Where are the yogis going to meditate? Where are they going to sleep? Where are they going to eat?

Anyone who works in SBS now live by the principle that nothing is impossible and that Rome CAN be built in a day! Four canopies were set up at the MPH site for meditation and Dhamma talks. Another was set up nearby to serve as the dining area. The male yogis could sleep in the Abbot's Vihara while the double-storey Dhamma workers' quarters, which was ready for occupation only on the day the retreat started, could double as a place for sitting meditation and sleeping quarters of the female yogis at night. Nineteen wooden platforms for sitting meditation were specially made and we had a good stock of circular mosquito nets from Sri Lanka.

Finally, with all the major and minor details looked into, the 20 yogis who had the privilege to participate in this first retreat in SBS checked into this 'hill resort' on 23 December 2001 at 8:00am.

During their 'last breakfast' together on 30 December 2001, the yogis shared and compared experiences and views. It was obvious that for all of them, this retreat had been a unique one—what with the Dhamma talks delivered in three languages: English, Hokkien and Myanmar. Their verdict: EXCELLENT. Below are excerpts of their impressions.

At first, I thought the place unsuitable for walking meditation. I had difficulty balancing myself on the uneven path and it was painful to step on the stony areas. After a few days, I found the sensations were good objects and I began to enjoy walking meditation. The atmosphere is suitable. The air is fresh and the surroundings quiet. It is cool and breezy in the morning and at

Straight 'A's
for SBS' First Meditation Retreat

SBS helpers get a taste of their good kamma ripening as they receive the gift of Dhamma. Lim Lay Hoon reports.

night. The qi of the environment is good and I didn't feel sleepy at all throughout.

Chen Sew Kian

The setting is natural and we have the taste of meditating at the edge of a forest. It gives me a sense of freedom, as we are not confined within the four walls of a building.

Doreen Lim

We have many choices of place to meditate in. We can meditate under the kuti or under a tree.

Ng Irene

The slopes are good for walking meditation as I could see sensations clearly. On a bright moonlit night, I walked down to the sima pavilion. On my way up, I had to stop for rest as I found climbing the steep slopes taxing. Then Grace advised me to walk mindfully and concentrate on each step at a time. True enough, I didn't feel tired at all after that. It is also a change from meditating in the town. The beautiful view of the surrounding hills and jungles is a welcome relief when boredom arises. Also, when there is no clear physical sensation to observe, I can listen to the pleasing sounds of nature and it has given me a feeling of mental peace.

Ang Poh Heang

Going to the toilet (the one located near the water source) at about 5:00am was quite a harrowing experience with the darkness and many sounds of the jungle, the insects, the cold and the isolation.

Eating together with mindful yogis or walking up the stairs behind a mindful yogi can be very revealing on one's own state of mindfulness and concentration. It was inspiring to be practising with experienced yogis who served as role models.

I have very strong impressions of Ven. Aggacitta's intent to teach well. For example, when he repeated an instruction given previously, when he listened patiently to unmindful remarks and when he elaborated on what transpired during the interview. His instructions on vipassana meditation were straightforward, clear and precise. The content of each Dhamma talk was very relevant and timely. It addressed the thoughts and doubts raised the previous day. It was also presented very concisely.

Ooi Gim Eng

The facilities provided were sufficient and easily accessible. It was refreshing to bathe in the cool spring waters. Ample food was served. There was a great variety of food and drinks. We were well taken care of.

Tan Buck Soon

I have been practising vipassana meditation for eight years but this is the first time that I have learned how to walk mindfully. I used to find walking meditation very boring because we were taught to focus on the soles of our feet; so I just couldn't grasp the dynamics of walking at all. Now I find walking meditation so very interesting. One can really feel the intentions and physical sensations changing all the time along the legs. Sometimes they can extend up to the hips and above the buttocks as well.

Siah Chee Way

Sifu banyak pandai lo. Cakap Burmese susah susah pun dia tahu. Orang sini dan Malaysia nasib sangat baik lo! (Bhante is a very good teacher. He has a good command of the Burmese language. The people here are very lucky indeed!)

Kogyi

All the conditions necessary for good practice were available. No wonder that when Chuah Beng Soon, a 15-year-old student, was asked how he reacted when he found out his straight—As PMR exam results on 29 December (2 days after it was released), he had this to say—"I felt joy. I wanted to jump about. However, I didn't because I couldn't as I was noting the joy." Congratulations, Beng Soon, for having done well academically *and* spiritually.

The first retreat in SBS too scored straight As. Sadhu to the organisers, helpers and well wishers. In particular, the yogis would like to express their grateful appreciation to the following people—Andrew Kang. Ooi Bee Bee, Ooi Teow Keat, Ng Kian Chong, Mrs. Ng Boon Khim, Yee Ah Huah, Chi Hui Fong, Saw Paik Kee, Lim Poh Eng and Kevin Chuah. May your kindness, generosity and sacrifices be amply rewarded.

Looking at the calender of SBS events for the year 2001, I must say it has been a most enriching and fulfilling year. Anyone would be amazed at how much has been accomplished within a year. This feat would not have been achieved without the capable leadership of Ven. Aggacitta. We are most indebted to him for giving us not only the opportunity to serve the Sasana but also the Buddha-Dhamma, the most precious of all gifts. Sadhu, Bhante! SBS

UNFOLDMENT

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

13 May Fong Choong Mun and his wife, Chua Ean Ean personally bring a donation of RM25,000 for a kuti. The sum is donated by them jointly with his sister, Fong Lay Lean. He also brings a cheque for another RM25,000 from his father, Fong Swee Cheong, as donation for another kuti.

The management committee of SBS meets for the 3rd time. It begins at 2.30pm and ends at 9.30pm.

16 May Jeremy Ee, a manager of Lim Hee Chay's transport company, Mega Logistic Holdings (M) Bhd. happens to be in Taiping on a working trip and checks on the Kimgress sanitary ware despatch. The sponsored items are 37 sets of C65 c/w T58E cisterns and lid, 19 L55 basins, 33 soap holders and 37 toilet roll holders. After completing his job, he goes up to SBS about which he has heard so much. He leaves, highly impressed.

19 May Dr. Soo and his team come to inspect the sharp corner at the new road leading to the abbot's office as well as the site for the sima, pond and dam. Site supervisor Lim Eng Keat and Ven. Aggacitta take the opportunity to learn how to use a theodolite as Dr. Soo surveys the newly blasted site of the sima area in order to establish the centre of the sima pavilion.

20 May SBS engages an administrative assistant, Chi Hui Fong, who will start work on 1 July 2001.

24 May TNB power supply is finally energised. It has been quite a long wait since the time the spun poles were first put up on Dec. 15, 2000

28 May Kee Swee Aun of Klang offers his professional services as a quantity surveyor to SBS.

29 May A set of Dell computer together with a U-Max scanner and Hewlett –Packard printer, donated jointly by John Tan and Hor Kwei Cheong, arrive in TIMS.

30 May Two hours after the signing of the agreement with Telekom, a technician was sent to fix the 2 sets of RILL (Radio in Local Loop) telephones that were applied for with the help of Khoo Yeow Hooi.

3 June Michael Woo and Mr Loo arrive in TIMS in the evening and proceed to visit SBS. Mr Loo presents an automatic water pump for the Abbot's Vihara.

4 June Jade and Kim Saw, consultant architects for SBS, make a site inspection. Our new volunteer QS, Mr Kee Swee Ann and his family also arrive from Klang. Together with Ven. Aggacitta, Ng Kian Chong, Michael Woo and Low Fatt Lum, they discuss the nature of the contract for the next phase of construction work, which will include a Dhamma workers' quarters, sima pavilion and two more kutis. Unfortunately, Tan Buck Soon and Dr Soo Kian Sin are unable to attend the consultants' site meeting.

6 June SBS finally gets its first transport vehicle. The much-awaited Ford Ranger XLT UT 2G arrives (registration no. AEH 1999) – a great disappointment though! We were looking forward to a 'monk colour' vehicle, which we had been promised. Instead it is a shade of grey. Anyhow we are thankful that SBS now has its own 4WD to ferry whatever and whoever needs transport up and down the steep slopes. Thus far we have been conscripting Ng Kian Chong's Kembara, which never fails to respond. Now we need to tax it less often. Sadhu to you and your 4WD, Kian Chong!

7 June Sayadaw Jñanapurnik and Maechi Chi Ni pay a visit to SBS. Dr. and Mrs. Wong and David Wan of Klang bring them.

Chua Teng Teng, who has been volunteering her services as a quantity surveyor, informs us that she is unable to continue to do so. Thank you for all that you have done for us.

11 June Mr. Siah Chee Wei, our Representative in Perth, arrives in SBS to offer his live-in services as resident consultant engineer for a week.

14 June Mr. Siah is spending his sixth day up in SBS. He has been and is making himself indispensable, putting his versatile talents to work for SBS. He has been assisting in the survey of the sima and dam site. He is also helping to design the foundations for the water pump and storage tank, which will supply water to the vihara. His meticulous designs also include a lockable metal security cover for the small water pump. Besides this, he is also helping Ven. Aggacitta plan the electrical layout for the vihara and giving advice on certain engineering aspects of the vihara and sima. Mr. Siah expresses his gratitude to the members of TIMS who have been doing their best to look after him and to Ven. Aggacitta for giving him the opportunity to contribute his share to the setting up of SBS.

16 June Ong Thean Kin, Ling Ting Hook and Sam Kim Sun, members of the Ipoh Buddha Dhamma Association, are here to volunteer their services, something they promise to do on an ongoing basis. They help to clear the sima area of unwanted weeds in the afternoon.

17 June The SBS Management Committee has its fourth meeting from 3.00 to 9.00pm. A major part of the meeting is spent in discussing the ongoing preparations for the first major public event, the Sima Declaration Ceremony, at the end of the month.

18 June Sayadaw U Dhammapiya of the United States and Venerable Radha of Penang grace SBS with their presence.

20 June The construction of the sima dam begins today.

27 June SBS begins to take on an air of festivity as the tents for the visitor centre and food dana centre come up. Lighting fixtures are put in place.

Members of TIMS and supporters of SBS come up to spruce up the place for the events of this weekend. Construction work has left quite a mess in many spots. Armed with brooms, hoes, trowels, garbage bags and all manner of tools that are necessary to carry out the big cleanup, the volunteers soon set to work. They pack up well after 8.00pm.

28 June The cleanup work on SBS goes on as the volunteers relocate plants from the nursery to decorate strategic areas. Again, they work past 8.00pm.

29 June Another afternoon of final preparations as the volunteer workers clean the Abbot's Kuti and Office to get rid of the dust, dirt and grime of the construction work. The Abbot's Office will house members of the Sangha who will arrive later in the evening.

A group of volunteers mark out, in grid squares, an area covering the site over which the sima pavilion and connecting bridge will be built. This is the area where the monks will be chanting for the next two days to make a new sima.

Tan Joo Lan and her video production team arrive. They are briefed on the events of the next two days and now have an idea of what they need to focus on in their shoot.

The venerable members of the Sangha who are invited to participate in the Sima Declaration Ceremony arrive in the evening. They total 15 in number.

30 June The big day has finally arrived. Today's event, that of removing possible former simas, is a Sangha affair and no invitations have been issued to the public. Nevertheless, some local residents are here to witness the event. It is indeed a rare treat to get the chance to witness the making of a sima in Malaysia, so those in the know have made it a point to be here for this historic occasion.

In the evening, the monks hold a discussion, with PowerPoint presentation, on "Controversial Issues in the Making of a New Sima".

1 July This morning sees the demarcation and declaration of Sasanarakkha Sima. See articles on pp.16-18.

5 July SBS monks perform uposatha in the newly declared sima for the first time.

6 July Our faithful supporters from IBDA in Ipoh, led by Mr. & Mrs. Ong Thean Kin, are here again to do some more landscaping work.

12 July There is a great thunderstorm. The static generated by the lightning trips the ELCB, blows a power indicator, and causes sparks on the power box. We need to get a good lightning arrestor—*fast!*

15 July For the first time, SBS monks collect alms from the Taiping public. The chosen place is Pokok Assam market, which is the nearest place where money-begging 'monks' are sighted. In keeping with the Vinaya, no money is accepted. It is hoped that it will educate the public on the practice of pindapata.

The Management Committee holds its 5th meeting at TIMS's centre, lasting from 3.00pm until 10.30pm. It discusses the first Kathina Ceremony in SBS to be held on 18 November 2001. The committee decides that it will take up the sponsorship but will invite other Buddhist organisations who have been instrumental in the founding of SBS to jointly sponsor the auspicious event.

18 July The IBDA group of volunteers is here again to faithfully offer their services in the landscaping work. They bring a portable audio system and a water heater donated by Ipoh well-wishers.

Ng Kian Chong brings 2 ball-shape rice-paper lanterns donated by Eng Lai Hiang for the Abbot's office.

22 July Ven. Mahañano arrives to begin his stay at Khemarama, where he intends to spend the coming vassa. However, as there is lack of water supply at Khemarama, he has to stay at SBS first.

27 July Chiu Sheng Bin and Tan Heng Ghee are here again with a friend. They examine the durian trees and find most trees in good condition. The trees are flowering and there are already tiny fruits on some trees.

They bring along from Sukhi Hotu a portion of the English translation of the Tipitaka, donated by See Chim Han and friends.

31 July Phase 2 construction is officially awarded to Tong Hup Engineering when Ng Kian Chong, our Development Manager, gives them the letter of award.

3 Aug Our library patron, See Chim Han donates another collection of books to the SBS library on behalf of his group of friends when Ven. Aggacitta stops over at Sukhi Hotu, Penang.

4 Aug Recitation of Patimokkha takes place for the first time at Sasanarakkha Sima with the participation of the Venerables Aggacitta, Mahañano, Kusala and Kumara.

The Sima Declaration Organising Committee holds a small party at the car park in appreciation of its volunteers.

5 Aug The monks perform *samanalabha katika*, a monastic act to share gains between SBS and Khemarama, at SBS and later at Khemarama.

Vassa begins today in SBS. The three members of the Sangha, Ven. Aggacitta, Ven. Kusala and Ven. Kumara gather to make resolutions to stay at SBS for the next three months.

Having connected a phone line and moved various things such as the fax machine, computer, printer, books and files there from the site office to the Abbot's Office, Ven. Aggacitta at last starts using it as his work place.

12 Aug The SBS video recording team, Joo Lan and Soo Jin, is here to shoot footage for the next video production on SBS. See article on p.22.

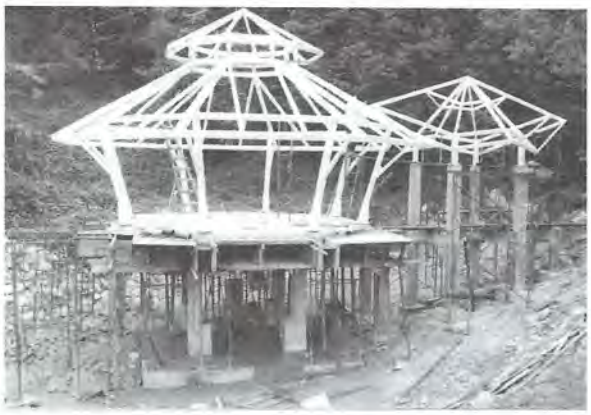
13 Aug We've been experiencing a number of lightning strikes that caused some damage to our equipment. In looking for solutions, Ah Heng brings Ir. Lee Cheow Tong, an electrical engineer, to look into the feasibility of putting up lightning arrestors.

17 Aug Mr. Goh Keat Soon comes with Teh Guan Leong, one of the marketing managers of Chuan Sim (Spritzer Mineral Water Factory) with a hot and cold water dispenser donated by the company under the directive of Lim Kok Boon, the Managing Director. Spritzer has been supplying SBS with free distilled water for the monks at SBS and Khemarama.

18 Aug Dr. Soo Kian Sin and his staff arrive this morning. They inspect and approve the proposed sites for kutis 1 and 18 and the Dhamma workers' quarters. Dr. Soo also gives suggestions on drainage issues and more terra-control slope treatment. In the evening, after a day of fruitful work, Dr. Soo and his team treated themselves to the refreshing natural jacuzzis found in the waterfalls adjacent to SBS's boundary.

23 Aug Two water storage tanks of 600-gallon capacity each are taken up to the upper spring source. In preparation for their installation, the area is cleared for the construction of reinforced concrete bases.

24 Aug The columns of the sima pavilion are up and the main rafters are in place. The jack roof also goes up. We can finally see the shape of the octagonal pavilion.



30 Aug Satcom technicians install a Panasonic Advanced Hybrid System. Among other things, it enables call transferring and intercom. Chan Huan Hoe also brings a Sanyo cordless phone for the Abbot's Office.

31 Aug Ven. Mahañano returns from Bukit Mertajam, together with Sayadaw U Sumana who comes for a visit with a group of devotees.

Michael Woo, our water treatment and supply consultant, is here with his contractor friend, Mr. Loo. They are consulted on the water tank and pump.

Tan Buck Soon, our consultant structural engineer, and his wife, Ooi Siew Swan, who is also SBS' development-communications secretary are here. Buck Soon is here to discuss engineering plans for the sima, Dhamma workers' quarters and the administrative block.

1 Sept Hor Kwei Loon, who had advised on the setting up of the SBS Management Committee, is here with his wife and friends. Again, we pick his brains for advice on management. He discusses with Ven. Aggacitta the need for a full-time General Administrator and short-term Dhamma workers. They can spend their free time meditating, reading Dhamma books in the Abbot's Office, etc. Those who would like to do short stints in SBS are welcome to contact us. *Note: Only males are accepted for staying-in workers. Food shall be on the house.*

2 Sept The SBS Management Committee meets for its 6th session in TIMS. The meeting lasts from 2.20pm to 9.00pm

11 Sept Ong Teng Kheang of the Taiping Buddhist Society sends his 2 boys, Ah Hong & Ah Tong, for a short stay under Ven. Kusala's tutelage.

16 Sept Visitors galore for SBS as we welcome two groups of visitors from Petaling Jaya. Pat Boey of the Bandar Utama Buddhist Society brings 7 other members of BUBS on a reconnaissance mission to plan for their upcoming visit in October when an estimated 122 BUBS members will come to do some voluntary work here.

The sifu of the Yangshengong Centre for *qi-gong* in Petaling Jaya, Master SC Chow together with his wife and three other *qi-gong* instructors from the centre are also here. Master Chow comments that SBS has very good *qi*, but is dispersed. He says that he will come one day with at least eight senior members to centralise the *qi*.

Ven. Mahañano teaches Ven. Kumara how to operate the sewing machines and to sew robes in preparation for the Kathina day in November.

Ven. Aggacitta discusses with BL Tan and Siah Chee Wei the fixing of a lightning arrestor at the sima area.

The SBS Kathina Ceremony Organising Committee holds its first meeting to plan for SBS' first Kathina, which is scheduled for 18 November.

18 Sept Chiu Sheng Bin and his friend Tan Heng Ghee are here again to check on the progress of the orchard. The duo also brings with them cuttings of the kembang pukul lapan flower and propagates

them in the nursery. Besides that, they also plant *Theomatoccus danielli*, a sweetener plant that is 2000 times sweeter than sugar — in the area where the water collection tanks are situated. In the process, they spot an interesting plant with variegated leaves and baptise it *batik plant*.

Sheng Bin teaches our orchard worker, Saw Kheng Hong, how to thin the durian fruits so that only 2-3 fruits are left on each branch. This is to ensure that the trees are not stressed by having to nurture too many fruits.

20 Sept Sayadaw U Rajinda and Sayadaw U Nandiya are here. Dr. and Mrs. Wong, Ah Fatt and a friend accompany them. They have brought along the stupa scale model made by Mr. Cheah Yeow Seng, a ceramics lecturer from the Kuala Lumpur College of Arts.

21 Sept Ir. Lee Cheow Tong spares some free time to come to SBS again for another site visit to the sima. His expertise is consulted. He suggests that we install a lightning arrester and ionizer for the sima pavilion.

22 Sept Lee Siew Chee, our Perak State Representative, is here. She brings along a busload of Ipoh students and they spend the morning weeding. They also do some clearing in the sima area. What a fruitful way to spend a beautiful morning. We do need such *work gangs* to help keep our landscape looking good.

Some 40-odd members from the Subang Jaya Buddhist Association are also here. They spend about two hours here from 4.00pm. The Taiping rain dampens their visit a bit, but they manage to listen to a Dhamma talk by Ven. Aggacitta after which the more gutsy ones braved slight drizzle to explore more of SBS.

24 Sept Wong Hoe Kuan of Ipoh, a student of UPM, comes to stay. He spends a week on SBS as a Dhamma worker.

30 Sept The SBS Management Committee holds its monthly meeting. *It's a record!* It lasts only 3¾ hours, which is far shorter than the earlier meetings.

1 Oct The timber for the sima pavilion and Dhamma workers' quarters donated by Teresa Jong of Kuching arrives today at Taiping—all the way from Sarawak. It is *belian* wood, reputed to be the hardest wood species available. Our heartfelt thanks to Teresa for her generous dana and to Thomas Lim of Penang for arranging the transportation from Kuching to Taiping, as well as jointly sponsoring it with his family and friends. Many thanks also to Tan Guan Soon of Kuching who brought SBS to Teresa and then followed up with necessary coordination and arrangements until the specified sawn timber safely leaves Kuching.

6 Oct We are happy to welcome 9 UPM students as volunteer workers for the day. They help with the landscaping work and also do some clearing at the spring source.

Ng Kian Chong brings back relics, including what is believed to be the Lord Gotama Buddha's, collected by Lim Tian Woh of Klang. They will be placed in the stupa to be installed on top of the sima pavilion.

8 Oct Aggabodhi and Mittananda, 2 of the UPM students who came two days ago, arrive to stay for a few days as voluntary Dhamma workers. They help out with more landscaping work.

10 Oct Our volunteer workforce is gaining strength. Sunanda and Sumitta, who were here on 6 October with their varsity-mates, and Paññā who is studying at UTM, joins in as voluntary workers. They work on the pathway next to the Abbot's office.

The bronze stupa for the sima pavilion arrives. The stupa is designed by a Malaysian and modelled by a Malaysian. It is cast in Bangkok though, since we lack such expertise here. Mr. & Mrs. AK Wong of Kuala Lumpur are the main sponsors.

11 Oct A simple stupa installation ceremony begins at 3.15pm. See article on p.19.

14 Oct Today, eight monks who earlier attended the Kathina Robe Offering Ceremony at Taiping Bodi Langkaram Buddhist Temple utilises Sasanarakkha Sima at SBS for their kathina *Sangha-kamma*, that is, to award the kathina cloth to the chosen monk. Ven. Mahañano, Ven. Kusala and Ven. Kumara joins in, making a total of eleven monks. Besides preparing the sima facility, SBS devotees also help to transport the monks and some devotees up the hill. It's certainly a sign of harmony among the Buddhist community in Taiping.

16 Oct A site has been chosen as a shrine where Buddha image will be placed. It is a rocky outcrop at a high point near the edge of SBS with boulders naturally positioned to create a near-perfect foil for the Buddha image. Initial plans for its landscaping are eagerly made.

19 Oct The Buddha image is here. It was cast in Yogyakarta (Jawa Island) out of lava.

20 Oct Three busloads of BUBS members numbering 149-strong arrive for a two day visit. See article on p.24.

21 Oct Another UPM student, Sin Kuen, joins us as volunteer Dhamma worker and starts off by planting pulai trees.

24 Oct Ven. Aggacitta has a meeting in Buddhist Wisdom Centre, PJ, with Jade Saw, Tey (her assistant), Tan Buck Soon, Kee Swee Aun and Dr. Soo to discuss the detailed contract for Phase 2 and also to work out preliminary designs for Phase 3.

26 Oct A number of the consultants involved in the building and construction are here. Jade Saw and Low Fatt Lam discuss details of the sima construction together with Ven. Aggacitta, Ooi Eng Huat and Kee Swee Aun.

Dr. Soo, with KL Khor and Ven. Mahañano lending a helping hand, surveys the site for the proposed Sangha Central Facilities area.

It's a busy day on SBS as Tan Joo Lan and Bala are also here to take clips for their second video production on SBS. She manages to shoot some of the consultants as well as interview them. She also takes some clips on interesting aspects of the landscaping.

The SBS Management Committee holds its next meeting beginning at 3.00pm and ends at 7.00pm.

1 Nov As today is the final day of the vassa, which is called the *Mahapavarana* Day, the monks gather at the sima to perform the *pavarana* (invitation). In accordance with the Lord Buddha's instruction, each monk invites other members of the Sangha to point out his faults.

6 Nov Ven. Myong An, a Malaysian monk ordained in Korea pays SBS a visit. He tells Ven. Aggacitta about a new meditation centre in Korea, and their method of practice.

The ceramic stupa, which was the model for the main stupa, is installed at the apex of the sima pavilion roof over the bridge. Relics are also enshrined in it.

8 Nov There's heavy rain and the sima pond is beautifully flooded with water which overflows the dam and cascades down the rock-fill behind it.

18 Nov It's SBS's first Kathina and the heavens have set the tone for the day—the weather is perfect. The skies are clear with no hint of the infamous Taiping rain although it has been pretty wet the past few days. The sun stays discreetly away and there's no need for umbrellas throughout most of the morning.

The events of the day begin with offering light breakfast for the monks. At 7.00am, representatives from the joint sponsors of the Kathina gathered in the sima to offer the kathina cloth to the Sangha.

There are a total of 6 monks taking part in the ceremony. They are Ven. Aggacitta, Ven. Mahañano, Ven. Tejadhamma, Ven. Kusala, Ven. Kumara and Ven. Dhammaputta. See front page and pp.4-7.

Dec 4 SBS Management Committee holds it monthly meeting lasting from 2.45–7.00pm.

Dec 8 It has been decided to harvest the durian orchard by contract. This will bring in some income for SBS as well as solve the problem of durian poachers.

Dec12 Ven. Dhammarakkhita, on his way to Subang Jaya Buddhist Association to conduct a 10-day Vipassana retreat, drops by SBS for a five-day visit.

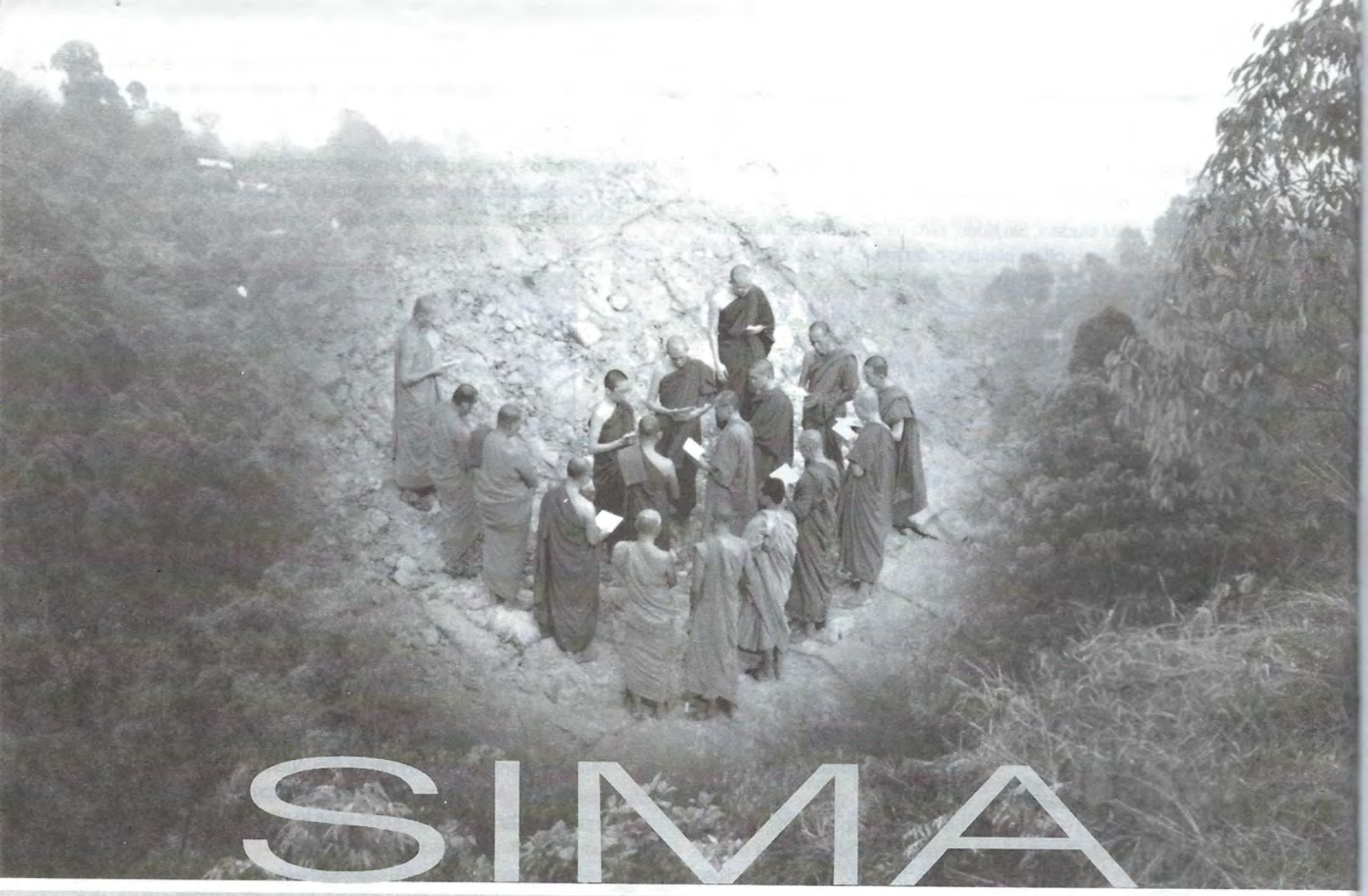
23 Dec The last major event for the year starts. About 20 SBS helpers participate in the first week-long meditation retreat held in SBS. See article on p.24. SBS

Change of Domain Name

http://www.sasanarakkha.org

Our web master, **John Lee**, has a message for those of you logging on into our web site.

SBS net has a new domain name, and its http://www.sasanarakkha.org. The
original domain,which is http://sasanarakkha.cjb.net will remain intact as visitors will be redirected to the new domain. Visitors will continue to get updates from the unfoldments in SBS site, make donation pledges, and join the SBS mail mailing list.



SIMA

July 1 2001, was a major milestone for SBS. Sasanarakkha Sima was declared in a ceremony conducted by 16 monks from all over Malaysia. The event had actually begun the day before, when the same members of the Sangha took part in a daylong ceremony to "cleanse" the designated area in preparation for the declaration ceremony. We bring you three different perspectives of this event on pp.16-18.