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Shakyamuni
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VICTORIAN
multicultural
commission



Victorian Observance United Nations Day of Vesak

DATE: 21 April 2009

Melbourne to celebrate timeless message of peace

The message of the Buddha – developing compassion and wisdom and practising kindness and goodwill towards all beings – is deeply relevant to our modern world as we face unprecedented environmental, humanitarian and economic challenges, say the organisers of the 2009 United Nations Day of Vesak celebration to be held in Melbourne on Saturday, 9 May.

Vesak, the first full moon day in May, is the most important day in the Buddhist calendar, an occasion marking the birth, enlightenment and passing of the Buddha around 2500 years ago.

On this day millions of people globally – Buddhist and non-Buddhist – take time to reflect on the Buddha's life and teachings, contemplate their relevance to their own lives, and practise according to the instructions provided by the Buddha.

This year in Melbourne, a cross-section of the city's scores of Buddhist communities have come together to celebrate the event with a free multicultural program which includes Buddhist chanting, teachings, meditation, performance and dance at the Melbourne Town Hall, from 1.30 to 5 pm.

Leaders from Melbourne's Interfaith community will join in the commemoration as the Vesak message of peace is echoed in every faith.

The event will be graced with a large gathering of monks and nuns from Melbourne's Buddhist centres – representing traditions from Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Taiwan, Cambodia, Japan, Tibet, Korea and Burma – who will be joined by practitioners and leaders from other faiths.

Vesak is recognised worldwide as an important cultural event. To acknowledge its global significance, in 1999 the General Assembly of the United Nations formally declared Vesak as an international day of recognition of Buddhism and the Buddha's legacy to the world.

In his Vesak Day message last year, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the Buddha's message of peace, compassion and love for all living beings "should inspire our efforts to address the broader challenges confronting our world – in peace and security, in development, and in the protection of our environment".

"It asks us to recognise our essential oneness, and to place the well-being of our communities and of all humanity at par with our own," he said.

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Victorian Observance United Nations Day of Vesak

Melbourne to celebrate timeless message of peace (*cont.*)

"We have to rise above our perceived narrow self-interests, and think and act as members of one global community. This is the path to enlightenment, and it is the foundation of a better world for all."

Australia's Prime Minister, the Hon. Kevin Rudd, has provided a message of support to this year's Vesak Day celebration in Melbourne.

"The Buddhist community plays a valuable role in Australian society and many have been inspired by its message of peace and compassion," he said.

"Its commitment to serving humanity and promoting interfaith understanding contributes greatly to a spirit of goodwill among Australians of all backgrounds.

"As an inclusive society, we support and respect the rights of citizens to maintain and develop their cultural and religious beliefs. In this spirit, I send my best wishes to the Buddhist community in Australia as it celebrates Vesak in 2009."

This year's organising committee comprises representatives of 27 Melbourne Buddhist temples and centres as well as the Buddhist Council of Victoria.

The event has been kindly sponsored by the City of Melbourne and the Victorian Multicultural Commission.

*For more information, including requests for photos or interviews phone Mary-Lou Considine on 0417 037 305 or Michelle Horyna on 9773 6329. Media are invited to attend the UN Day of Vesak at the Melbourne Town Hall.
Website: www.unvesak.org*



Caption: The 2008 Organising Committee at last year's UN Day of Vesak event in Melbourne