



**Message
from
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The UN Vesak celebration organized by MCU in grand scale today has its own religious, political and international roots in an important UN resolution of recognizing the Buddha. The unfolding of its history is fascinating and demands sincere congratulations to its organizers for their dedication and commitment.

We do not know when, how, in what form, and with what intentions the Vesak as a celebration began in the Buddhist traditions. From the inscriptions of Emperor Asoka, his erection of a monument at Lumbini, and his accounts of pilgrimage to Buddhist sites we can gather some concrete evidence to talk about the life and legacy of the historical Buddha. In recent years scholars have disputed the exact dates of the Buddha and have proposed a range of potential dates—from the 7th and 4th century BCE.

As Theravāda Buddhists, we believe three important things—the birth, enlightenment and *parinirvāna* of the historical Buddha—took place on full moon days of the month of Vesak. We also learn that in pre-Buddhist India, Vesak had already been an occasion of festivities. When we think of Vesak celebration in historical terms, however, we are less sure of when and how Vesak began to be celebrated in grand scale. Its grand celebratory origins might lie in the late colonial period in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia—a research area that demands our attention. At the moment, it is a great pleasure to be part of this unfolding of historical events and extend congratulations to those who labor to make it a reality.

This year, in particular, is special because of the 84th birthday anniversary of His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej. May the Triple Gem Bless His Majesty a long life!
Dīgāyuko hotu!