

Exhibition on Guru Padmasambhava (in Bhoti) inaugurated at Dharma Centre by International Buddhist Confederation

Leh, May 1: An exhibition on Guru Padmasambhava (in Bhoti) was inaugurated at the Dharma Centre by the International Buddhist Confederation (IBC) on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, in the presence of distinguished dignitaries and members of the monastic and scholarly community.

The ceremony was graced by the Ambassador of Mongolia, His Excellency Mr. Ganbold Dambajav; Secretary General, IBC, Shartse Khensur Jangchup Choeden Rinpoche; Director General, IBC, Abhijit Halder; Tourism Secretary, Sanjit Rodrigues, IAS; Education Secretary, Ms. Bhanu Prabha, IAS; LGA President, Ven. Gyen Dorjey Stanzin; Joint Secretary, BTI; members of the Ladakh Gonpa Association; AD Tourism; and Buddhist scholars, among other delegates. The visiting delegation first viewed a visual exhibition tracing the life and journey of Guru Padmasambhava through a series of richly curated illustrations depicting his timeline and enduring spiritual legacy.

In his welcome address, Ven. Gyen Dorjey Stanzin began with an ode to Guru Padmasambhava and noted the significance of the occasion, coinciding with the arrival of the holy relics of Tathagata Buddha in Ladakh. He welcomed the gathering to the exhibition and highlighted the series of programmes being conducted across the region, including an upcoming Buddhist conference. He also outlined the journey of the sacred relics and informed that, in their final leg, they would be brought to the Dharma Centre. He expressed gratitude to the Secretary for continued support in ensuring the smooth conduct of the event.

Delivering the keynote address, His Excellency Mr. Ganbold Dambajav, Ambassador of Mongolia to India, spoke on the profound influence of Guru Padmasambhava on Buddhism in Mongolia. He described the exhibition as sacred and significant for Mongolian Buddhism, and reflected on the historical ties between Ladakh and Mongolia, particularly through Kushok Bakula Rinpoche, who served as Ambassador of India to Mongolia. He also recalled the centuries-old tradition of Mongolian scholars travelling to Nalanda University, and referred to the exposition of Buddha relics in Mongolia in the 1930s.

Highlighting a renewed interest among Mongolia's younger generation in their religious and cultural heritage, he emphasised that Buddhism is not merely a religion but a way of life. He described Buddhism as a vital pillar of India-Mongolia relations, appreciated the IBC for strengthening this bridge, and conveyed thanks to Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Home Minister, the UT Administration, the Dharma Centre, and members of the Sangha.

Secretary General, IBC, Shartse Khensur Jangchup Choeden Rinpoche, spoke on the life of Guru Padmasambhava and the differing historical accounts regarding his birthplace. He underlined the need for scholars and intellectuals to arrive at a common understanding through dialogue and research, particularly in light of variations in literature concerning the duration of Guru Padmasambhava's stay in Tibet. He emphasised the importance of scientific documentation and evidence-based study of historical records for future generations, noting that exhibitions such as this play a vital role in preserving and disseminating such knowledge.

Tourism Secretary Sanjit Rodrigues described the occasion as historic and highlighted ongoing efforts to curate seminars and initiatives aimed at raising awareness among Ladakh's younger generation about their cultural heritage and traditional way of life. He noted that the exhibition traces the journey of Guru Padmasambhava in Ladakh, reflecting the deep reverence associated with him in the region, and expressed gratitude to the IBC and the Ladakh Gonpa Association for their efforts in organising the exhibition.

Director General, IBC, Abhijit Halder, in his address, remarked on the auspiciousness of the day, coinciding with Buddha Purnima, and noted that Guru Padmasambhava is revered as the Second Buddha. He observed that the public exposition of the holy relics in the morning and the inauguration of the exhibition in the evening made the day particularly significant. He further spoke about plans to take the exhibition across the Himalayan belt and emphasised the importance of scholarly dialogue on differing historical narratives. Referring to the upcoming conference in Orissa, he described Guru Padmasambhava's legacy as both historical and mystical, with traces evident across monasteries and meditation caves in Ladakh.

He highlighted the deep spiritual connection between Ladakh and the Guru, reflected in teachings, traditions, and annual festivals, and expressed hope that the exhibition would enhance understanding of this enduring legacy.

Mementoes were presented to the dignitaries. The English version of the exhibition will be inaugurated tomorrow at the Central Institute of Buddhist Studies (CIBS), Leh.



