

**Remarks at the Presentation Ceremony of the Replica of Fasting
Buddha**

Honourable Mr. Phanombootra Chandrajoti

Director General of the Fine Arts Department, Ministry of Culture

Most Venerable Mr. Anil Sakya

Respected Mrs. Chotika Akkrakitsophakul

Deputy Permanent Secretary for Culture

Respected guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you to this presentation ceremony of the replica of the sculpture of most revered Fasting Buddha by the Government of Pakistan to the Government of the Royal Kingdom of Thailand as a gesture of friendship. I am extremely grateful to you for taking time out time to join us this morning.

The Embassy of Pakistan has been working closely with the Government of Thailand to foster close cultural and people-to-people ties between the two countries. One such civilizational bond connecting the people of the two countries is Pakistan's rich Gandhara heritage.

Gandhara was located primarily in today's Northern Pakistan and parts of Eastern Afghanistan in regions including Taxila, Peshawar and Swat.

It covered the banks of river Indus and its tributaries particularly the Kabul, Swat and Haro rivers, which played a crucial role in shaping the regions' landscape and sustaining its population. River Indus served as a vital artery for trade, communication and cultural exchanges among the inhabitants of this region. Gandhara thrived at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East and the Indus supported trade routes that connected to the broader Indus valley civilization. Thus, today's Pakistan played a prominent and valuable role in Buddhist civilization as the seat of Gandhara with Taxila as its capital city. Alexander the Great invaded Gandhara in 327 BCE encountering fierce resistance. After Alexander, the region came under the Mauryan Empire led by Emperor Ashoka who promoted Buddhism and built stupas and monasteries across this region thus founding Gandhara Buddhism.

The sculpture of most revered Fasting Buddha is of inestimable spiritual value for the followers of Buddhism, which reflects Lord Buddha's self-mortification posture. The sculpture has been an object of great appreciation and main attraction at Lahore Museum since 1889. The sculpture belonging to the Mahayana philosophy is approximately 2,000 years old and is an artifact of its own kind complete with delicate and refined Gandhara artistic style. It is considered a miracle piece of sculpture and is extremely difficult to replicate. The sculpture signifies the extreme austerities practiced by Lord Buddha for six years before discovering the middle path leading to the supreme enlightenment on the

full moon day of the sixth lunar month called “Visakhapuja Day” under the great Bodhi tree.

The replica of this unique piece of art has been constructed by a renowned Pakistani artist, Mr. Jamil Kakar with fiber. The artist produced two replicas of Fasting Buddha this year. One was gifted to the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris and the other to the National Museum of Bangkok. I am confident that this unique sculpture of Lord Buddha will attract devotees not only from Thailand but from the entire ASEAN region. I would also like to cordially invite you to the photographic exhibition of Pakistan’s rich Gandhara heritage by the renowned Photographer and Vice President of the Thai Food Processors’ Association, Mr. David Lau. He has visited Pakistan several times and captured beautiful images of Gandhara and tapestry of Northern areas of Pakistan.

Pakistan attaches immense importance to its relations with ASEAN as reflected by its more than three decades of partnership with the grouping as the Sectoral Dialogue Partner. This partnership spreads across political, economic and cultural domains. Cultural ties and people-to-people contacts is the most significant pillar of this partnership, under which, the Government of Pakistan has made this great gesture of friendship to the Royal Kingdom of Thailand.

I thank you once again for joining us today for the presentation ceremony of the replica of fasting Buddha to the National Museum of Bangkok.

