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Buddha Buzz Weekly: Ithaca's Namgyal Monastery Will Build the First Dalai Lama Library and Learning Center

The new center will contain all the works of the current and previous Dalai Lamas. Plus, Meditating for Black Lives holds a guided meditation for Juneteenth, and Aung San Suu Kyi's trial begins.

By Alison Spiegel, Amanda Lim Patton, and Daniel Ilan Cohen Thin | JUN 19, 2021



The Dalai Lama | mauritius images GmbH / Alamy Stock Photo

Nothing is permanent, so everything is precious. Here's a selection of some happenings—fleeting or otherwise—in the Buddhist world this week.

ITHACA'S NAMGYAL MONASTERY WILL BUILD THE FIRST DALAI LAMA LIBRARY AND LEARNING CENTER

Ithaca, New York's Namgyal Monastery, the North American Seat of the Dalai Lama's personal monastery, announced on Thursday that it would build the first ever Dalai Lama Library and Learning Center, and is starting a fundraising campaign with the goal of \$5 million. The Learning Center will be a 9,240-square-foot physical space and virtual repository of all the works of the current and previous Dalai Lamas. It will also offer free and low-cost classes, meditations, and talks. "Our vision – one that is supported and shared by the Dalai Lama – is to encourage genuine human interconnection and unity in an increasingly divided world," Tenzin Choesang, President of Namgyal Monastery, said in a press release.

To commemorate Juneteenth, which celebrates the emancipation of enslaved African

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on Saturday, June 19. Find more information about upcoming events, including regular meditations in Brooklyn's Prospect Park this summer, on [Instagram](#), and read [a teaching for Juneteenth by Mecik here](#).

AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S TRIAL BEGINS

The trial of Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi began on Monday in the capital city of Naypyidaw, four months after she was placed under house arrest at the start of the [military coup in February](#). According to [BBC News](#), Suu Kyi faces seven charges, including violating the Official Secrets Act, sedition, and the latest and most serious charge of corruption, which carries a maximum prison sentence of 15 years. On Monday and Tuesday, the court heard the first criminal cases against Suu Kyi regarding her alleged violation of COVID-19 restrictions, illegal importation of walkie talkies, and sedition. A trial date has yet to be assigned for the deposed leader's most serious charges, which claim that Suu Kyi illegally accepted bribes of gold and cash. Her lawyer, Khin Maung Zaw, told [Agence France-Presse](#), "There is an undeniable political background to keep her out of the scene of the country and to smear her prestige." Activists and legal experts have criticized the junta's charges as a politically motivated attempt to justify the military crackdown and discredit the democratic opposition, [CNN reports](#). Suu Kyi's lawyers, who have met her twice since she was detained, said they expect the trial to conclude by July 26.

GIANT BODHISATTVA STATUE OUTFITTED WITH FACE MASK

In Fukushima, Japan, a 187-foot tall statue of Kannon, the bodhisattva of compassion, has been outfitted with a 77-pound custom-made face mask. Installed on June 16, the process took four workers a total of three hours to complete. According to Houkokuji Aizu Betsuin temple manager Takaomi Horigane, the workers came up with the idea while discussing restoration plans for the statue, which had been damaged in a February earthquake. The



Japan's delayed vaccine rollout has left them with a current vaccination rate of roughly 11

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The documentary film *Never Forget Tibet* will appear at the Cannes Film Market, or Marché du Film, the business counterpart to the Cannes Film Festival, in July. Just a few weeks before the festival, the UK-based distribution company Parkland Pictures acquired the sales rights to the documentary about His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, which features an original score from Anoushka Shankar and narration from Hugh Bonneville (*Downton Abbey*). Focusing on the Dalai Lama's escape from Tibet in 1959, the film includes previously unseen letters to Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. It also includes rare archival photographs from Austrian explorer Heinrich Harrer (the Dalai Lama's informal tutor, portrayed by Brad Pitt in *Seven Years Tibet*), and a firsthand account of the Dalai Lama's escape related by Har Mander Singh, the Indian political officer who helped him reach India safely. "In these strange times we are all living through, it's essential we share our love and compassion with each other and the natural world," Director Jean-Paul Mertinez told Deadline.

INDIAN STATE OF BIHAR, HOME TO BUDDHIST PILGRIMAGE SITES, ASKS FOR FINANCIAL BAILOUT AFTER PANDEMIC-DRIVEN TOURISM COLLAPSE

In a normal year, tourists flock to Bihar, the northeastern state in India that is home to Buddhist sites like Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha's awakening, and Nalanda, the ancient Buddhist university. But visits by tourists plummeted so severely this year that the tourism industry has asked for a bailout, reaching out to politician Suresh Prabhu and Union tourism minister Prahlad Singh Patel, the *Hindustan Times* reports. "Imagine the life of people who have been totally dependent upon domestic and foreign guests, sales of tour packages and local crafts. There has been no work and no earnings," Kaulesh Kumar, general secretary of the Association of Buddhist Tour Operators (ABTO), said. The association is requesting interest-free loans and a 24-month moratorium on existing loan

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International Venare Mission temple in Bodhi Gaya, Bihar. Sculptor Mintu Patil and his team of 22 artisans began creating the statue in March 2019 but had to suspend the project in 2020 due to the COVID-19 lockdown. After resuming work on the statue in November, the artists are now in the final stages of assembly. Once completed, the statue will be 100 feet (30 meters) long, according to [Buddhistdoor Global](#). The statue—which will be unveiled in the next few months—is sure to be a major attraction for Buddhist pilgrims and tourists visiting Bodhi Gaya.

Depictions of the reclining Buddha represent the Buddha during the [final moment of his life](#), his head resting on his right elbow or a cushion, as he passes into parinirvana—death of an enlightened being and their absolute release from the cycle of death and rebirth. This popular depiction of the Buddha is meant to express that all beings have the potential to be awakened and released from suffering.

Taking inspiration from reclining Buddha statues, a new art installation in Manhattan’s Morningside Park depicts the iconic Statue of Liberty in an uncharacteristic pose. *Reclining Liberty* is the work of artist Zaq Landsberg, who crafted the 25-foot-long statue. In his [artist statement](#), Landsberg said he merged the traditional Buddhist reclining pose and the quintessential American symbol to ask viewers to contemplate the status of the ideals that the Statue of Liberty represents:

Is the U.S. as an entity forever upright and tall, is it an eventual decline and fall, or is there another stage for the country that will transcend this symbol altogether. After all the events of 2020, and the unmooring of pretty much every American institution, this question is not just theoretical.