

## **AROUND THE SGI**

### **SGI-Nepal Opens New Center**

On Dec. 22, 2000, SGI-Nepal opened the Nepal Peace Center in Kathmandu, Nepal. Attending dignitaries included Nepalese Crown Prince Dipendra Bir Bikram Shah Dev, Culture, Tourism and Civil Aviation Minister Tarini Datta Chataut, other government officials and guests. Nepal TV and Nepal Radio reported the opening on their respective news programs and 13 Nepalese newspapers covered the story. To mark the event, the SGI's World Boys and Girls Art Exhibition also formally opened and will show through Jan. 7. The center, a traditional Nepalese-style structure, is three stories high and includes a 300-seat prayer hall and a 100-seat meeting hall.

### **SGI-Thailand Marks 40th Anniversary**

On Dec. 16–17, 2000, SGI-Thailand sponsored a musical extravaganza titled “Culture Festival of Hope Toward the New Century” at the Thailand Cultural Centre in Bangkok, Thailand. Approximately 10,000 performers and participants took part in the festival, which celebrated SGI-Thailand's 40th anniversary and the beginning of the 21st century. SGI President Ikeda sent a congratulatory message to the members.

Mrs. Nathanon Thavisin, deputy permanent secretary of the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, praised the SGI-Thailand members for their united performance, and for their positive contributions to Thai society based on Buddhist humanism. In July 2000, during the worst flooding to strike central Udon Thani province in 100 years, SGI-Thailand members had provided emergency relief. They were later awarded a special plaque inlaid with a relief of His Majesty the King Bhumibol Adulyadej.

### **The Netherlands and Italy To Host Human Rights Exhibition**

The SGI, as part of its human rights education project, will sponsor the opening of “Toward a Century of Humanity — An Overview of Human Rights in Today's World” in the Netherlands and Italy. The SGI and Zeist City will sponsor the exhibition in the Netherlands, with support from the Netherlands United Nations Association, the Netherlands UNESCO Centre, the Netherlands Committee for the Earth Charter, the University of Nijmegen Peace Institute, and others. In Italy, the exhibition will visit the cities of Lavagna, Florence, and Palermo cities.

### **Yucatan State, Mexico, Thanks SGI President**

Yucatan State, Mexico, presented SGI President Daisaku Ikeda with a letter of appreciation for his contribution to society as a result of the SGI's activities that advance culture and education. SGI-Mexico General Director Roberto Rios accepted the letter on behalf of Mr. Ikeda from a representative of Yucatan Governor Victor Cervera Pacheco on Nov. 26, 2000, at a theater in Merida City, the capital of Yucatan. Approximately 600 SGI

members from Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize attended. (Yucatan State abounds with the ruins of an ancient Mayan civilization. In 1998, SGI-Mexico sponsored an exhibit in Merida City introducing the SGI's activities for peace, culture and education.)

### **Dialogue Between Bulgarian Art Historian and SGI President Published**

A Bulgarian edition of *The Lion's Heart*, a dialogue between renowned Bulgarian art historian Dr. Axinia D. Djourova of Sofia University, Bulgaria, and SGI President Ikeda, was recently published by the Hellene & Ivan Dujcev Foundation, a Bulgarian publishing company.

On Nov. 17, 2000, Dr. Djourova spoke at a reception commemorating the book's publication at the National Cultural Palace in Sofia City. She related that her initial meeting with Mr. Ikeda was in 1982 and expressed her heartfelt joy that the publication of the book was finally realized with the help of the Bulgarian people, who stood up for democratization of their country. Bulgarian President Petar Stoyanov, Culture Minister Emma Moskova, and Sofia Mayor Stefan Sofiyanski each sent a message to the commemorative lecture. Approximately 200 guests from cultural and intellectual circles attended.

### **Denmark High School Honors Soka Gakkai Presidents**

On Nov. 18, 2000, Denmark's Askov Folk High School in Vejen City honored the first three Soka Gakkai presidents by dedicating a tree as the "First Three Presidents' Tree." Former Principal Hans Henningson, current Principal Henning Dochweiler, Poet Laureate Esther Gress, Vejen Mayor Regner Busk and his wife, Marine, along with other guests, attended the tree-planting on campus. During the reception, Ms. Gress read a lengthy poem she had written honoring Mr. and Mrs. Ikeda. Mayor Busk expressed hopes of welcoming Mr. Ikeda to Vejen in the near future and hosting an exhibit of Mr. Ikeda's photography at the city museum. (In September 2000, Mr. Ikeda received the Askov Educational Award from the Denmark school for his efforts to foster individual self-awakening and empowerment.)

*Courtesy of SOKANET ([www.sokagakkai.or.jp](http://www.sokagakkai.or.jp))*