

AFP : Exile group says Buddhist monk arrested in Vietnam

Agence France Presse

HANOI, March 31 (AFP) - A Buddhist monk was arrested in Ho Chi Minh City after he visited the deputy leader of the dissident Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam, an exile group based in France said Thursday.

Thich Vien Phuong was held Wednesday after he left the Thanh Minh Zen Monastery, where he had visited Thich Quang Do, 76, deputy head of the church, according to the International Buddhist Information Bureau.

Police refused to comment and the arrest could not be confirmed by any independent source.

The UBCV has been banned since 1981 for refusing to submit to communist party supervision.

Do as well as Thich Huyen Quang, the 86-year-old church patriarch, were placed under de facto house arrest in October 2003 and accused of being in possession of state secrets.

Vietnam has come in for repeated international criticism for its suppression of religious

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freedoms and constant harassment of political dissidents.

In September 2004, the United States listed Vietnam as a «country of particular concern» for abuse of religious freedoms, a move that could in theory lead to sanctions.

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