

# The CAMBODIA DAILY

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The Associated Press

**CORRUPTION TRIAL** - Ho Chi Minh City's reputed mafia boss Truong Van Cam (left) sits and waits for his sentencing Thursday at Ho Chi Minh City's court. He was sentenced to death. (page 15)

## Students Blast CPP-Backed Pagoda Boys

BY NHEM CHEA BUNLY  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

Some 230 students residing at six Buddhist pagodas in Phnom Penh have put their names to a petition denouncing the CPP-backed Pagoda Boys association, which they describe as a politically motivated group of troublemakers.

Students who earlier this week signed the petition said they were compelled to dissociate from the Pagoda Boys, who they accuse of using violence to disrupt peaceful demonstrations by students and workers.

The petition, a copy of which was received Thursday, follows warnings on Sunday by the Pagoda Boys against Funcinpec President Prince Norodom Ranariddh, who they accuse of making insulting remarks regarding students who live at Buddhist temples. Funcinpec officials have said the prince's comments have been taken out of context.

"We are pagoda students in Phnom Penh. We would like to deny the Pagoda Boys' statement that uses pagoda students as tools to support and protect a small group of dictators," the petition says.

"In fact, they are not real pagoda students. They are glue-sniffing gang boys who were bought

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## Implementation of Mideast Peace Plan Begins

BY KARIN LAUB  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM - Israel and the Palestinians took tentative steps toward meeting their first obligations under a peace plan Thursday, a day after affirming their commitment to the three-phase document at a US-sponsored Mideast summit.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas prepared to meet with Islamic militants in the Gaza Strip over the weekend, and hopes to extract a pledge from them within a week to halt attacks on Israelis, a senior Palestinian

official said.

Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz met with army commanders Thursday to prepare for dismantling 12 to 15 settlement outposts in the West Bank, the Haaretz daily said. The ministry confirmed the meeting, but declined comment on what was discussed. The first outposts will be removed in the coming days, said Zalman Shoval, an adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

About 100 outposts, consisting of a few mobile homes each, have been set up by settlers on West Bank hilltops in the past five years

to thwart land-for-peace agreements. At Wednesday's summit in the Jordanian Red Sea resort of Aqaba, under the auspices of US President George W Bush, Sharon said he would start removing outposts, but did not say how many.

The peace plan calls for dismantling those established since March 2001, when Sharon took office. The Maariv daily on Thursday quoted Sharon as saying he had disagreements with the US over the outposts.

Implementation of the so-called

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## Kampot Ceremony Symbolizes Break From Past

BY MIKE FARRELL  
AND PHANN ANA  
THE CAMBODIA DAILY

CHHUK DISTRICT, Kampot province - Villagers here, many who are former Khmer Rouge fighters, are familiar with the sound of gunfire, but the crack from a single shot fired on Thursday morning startled a crowd of about 1,500.

They gathered in front of the Taken commune office to witness fire destroy 473 weapons used by the Khmer Rouge, which was active in the villages of Chhuk district through the mid-1990s.

Another snap from a stray bullet drew gasps. A round had

apparently been left inside a rusted chamber, while 15 other bullets had been removed from that chamber. More villagers backed away. The growing flames heated the already hot morning.

The blaze that would melt AK-47s, M-16s and rocket launchers was intended to be symbolic of the area's willingness to leave behind its turbulent past and send the message that it is eager for development dollars and national assistance.

"These 473 weapons are the symbols of war and resistance that lie in the past," said David de Beer, program manager for European

Union Assistance on Curbing Small Arms and Light Weapons in Cambodia. "A symbol that the violence and destruction is behind you. With peace comes security and development."

EU/ASAC has been responsible for ridding the country of 107,644 weapons since May 1999 in "Flame of Peace" ceremonies. Thursday's blaze was the 23rd orchestrated by the weapons destruction program.

Last week in Stung Treng province, it rendered 2,535 weapons useless.

But the inferno in Chhuk was a

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