Human rights group sues firm in Myanmar

LOS ANGELES, Sept 4: A human rights group Tuesday sued Unocal to block construction of a 1.2 billion dollars pipeline in Myanmar, charging the military government is destroying villages in the project's path and using forced labour. reports AP.

"The Myanmar military government has forced entire villages to work on the railroad without pay while under armed guard by Myanmar's," the Centre for Human Rights and Constitutional Law charged. "People in the region have named the railroad the "New Death Railway." The government has burned villages in the pipeline path."

The federal lawsuit, seeks to end the contract between Myanmar's government and Los, Angeles-based Unocal, which owns the rights to a natural gas field in Myanmar.

The French oil company total signed the original contract with a Myanmar government firm in 1992, according to the complaint, and was joined by Unocal the following year.

There has been effective public pressure in both Europe and the United States against companies investing in Myanmar. The Danish and Dutch beer-makers Carlsberg and Heineken gave up on joint ventures last month. Earlier, Pepsi-Cola sold its 40 per cent stake in a Myanmar bottling

US may raise interest rates this month

WASHINGTON, Sept 4: The US Federal Reserve is growing uneasy about the pace of US economic growth and may raise interest rates by a half point later this month; the Wall Street journal reported yesterday, says AFP.

The paper said Fed policymakers could increase the benchmark federal funds rate from 5.25 per cent to 5.75 per cent, rather than 5.5 as has been anticipated, at their nextmeeting September 24.

We're at a critical juncture, the journal quoted a Fed official as saving. "We need to see more evi-

dence of moderating growth." Critical to the decision taken by the Federal Reserve's open market committee will be a report on August unemployment due out on Friday.

Any further fall in the jobless rate, currently at 5.4 per cent, could spark fears of wagedriven price increases and prompt the Fed to intervene to cool down the economy.

Wall Street analysts already are predicting the report will show that the US economy created 275, 000 new jobs last month, taking the unemployment rate down to 5.2 per cent.

The Fed this year now has taken a hands-off approach to US economic growth, easing the federal funds rate in January and leaving it unchanged at subsequent meetings of the

open market committee. The rate, charged by banks making overnight loans among themselves, is a target figure that tends to affect the cost of credit throughout the economy.

Despite strong growth and consistently low unemployment, inflation has so far this year remained under control The consumer price index rose at an annual rate of 3.5 per cent in the first seven months of 1996, after 2.9 per cent in the same period last year.

On Friday, one of the Governors of the Federal Reserve. Larence Lindsey, told a television interviewer the economy was under no current inflationary threat but warned that "overheating" remained a distinct possibility.

ACES, Krunichev to sign \$70m satellite deal

JAKARTA, Sept 4: Pan-Asian consortium Pt Asia Cellular Satellite System (ACES) is to sign a contract with Russia's Krunichev Enterprises on September 24 to launch its satellite in 1998, a report said Wednesday, according to AFP.

The chief executive officer of ACES, Adi Rahman Adiwoso, was quoted by the Jakarta Post as saying the total value of the deal was about 70 million dol-

Under the contract, Krunichev will launch ACES first satellite on board its proton rocket from the Krunichev space centre in Baikanur Kazakhstan.

Adiwoso said the satellite known as the Garuda and manufactured by US-based Lockheed Martin, is expected to be

launched between July and September 1998 A second satellite is due to be launched the following year

however ACES has not announced which company will

launch the second satellite. ACES, set up in February 1995, is an equal joint venture between Indonesia's private satellite carrier firm Pt Pasifik Satelit Nusantara, Philippine's long distance telephone com-

pany, and Thailand's Jasmine international. The ACES system will allow connection between hand-held phones and public telephone networks covering India. Bangladesh, Myanmar, China, Korea, Southern Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Indo-China, and ASEAN, an area of 2.5 billion

ASEAN groups - Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Financial markets across Asia shaken after US attack on Iraq

SINGAPORE, Sept 4: Calm returned to Singapore. Malaysian and Hong Kong financial markets Wednesday but investors in Japan and other Asian capitals were on edge following a second US missile attack on Iraq, reports AFP.

The blue-chip Straits Times Industrials Index of the stock exchange of Singapore rose 22.75 points or one per cent to 2,128.01 at the lunch break, following a 23.54-point decline on Tuesday.

"The feeling is still very cautious but the market is recovering from the drop yesterday." said a Singapore dealer. " think maybe in the minds of investors, they know that the conflict is not going to esca-

"Those who lost yesterday were the people who panicked. There are people now coming in to bargain-hunt," he added. . Financial markets across

Asia were shaken on Tuesday when US B-52 bombers and warships launched a barrage of

27 cruise missiles on southern Iraq to punish it for attacks on Kurdish areas in the country's

US warships launched a second cruise missile attack on Wednesday to knock out air defence installations that were missed the first time around.

The benchmark brent crude oil futures on the Singapore International Monetary Exchange (SIMEX) was trading at the Lunch break Wednesday at 22.31 dollars per barrel for October delivery, off Tuesday's close of 22.45 dollars.

"I don't think it (the price increase) will really sustain unless some new developments come up. Even on the second attack, people are just taking profits right now. It's been like a yoyo," said an oil trader.

The dollar was mixed in quiet Singapore trading Wednesday, declining to 1.4839 marks at midday from the opening quote of 1.4850, while rising to 109.28 yen from

"It's not gong any higher." a trader said of the greenback.

The marked also recovered lost ground in Malaysia. The Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange index was up 6.14 points or 0.5 per cent to 1,099.46 at the close of morning trading, with prices higher across the board.

In Hong Kong, the Hang Seng Index was 92.11 points higher at 11,049 at the close of morning trading.

But in Japan, share prices declined on the Tokyo Stock Exchange Wednesday morning. with the Nikkei Stock Average falling 30.24 points or 0.15 per cent to end the morning session at 20,167.91 points.

Earlier gains were eroded by futures-led declines and profittaking amid a lack of buy support, dealers said.

The Nikkei index hit a low of 20,066.02 late in trading, with light futures selling on news of another round of US missile attacks against positions in southern Iraq.

"The impact was seen mostly on the futures, but it was short-

lived," a dealer said. The dollar firmed in Tokyo on reports of the US attacks, trading in late morning at 109.30 -32 yen, up from 109.27 yen in New York late Tuesday and 109.21 yen in Tokyo on Tuesday afternoon.

Share prices in Taiwan finished 0.5 per cent lower Wednesday as investors remained concerned over simmering tension in the gulf. The Taiwan Stock Exchange Weighted Price Index declined 29.19 points to 6,228.78.

"Most investors retreated to the sideline following US missile attacks on Iraq, but the impact of a new Gulf crisis will be short-lived," said Allen Wu of Masterlink Securities Co. Ltd.

In Manila, share prices closed 0.3 per cent lower on Wednesday, but it was blamed on uncertainty over US interest rates. The Philippine Stock Exchange index lost 10.29 points to close at 3,197, 60.

Oil prices soar

NEW YORK, Sept 4: The tur-'moil in Iraq sent energy prices sharply higher Tuesday, reports

By midday on the new York Mercantile Exchange, the benchmark light sweet crude oil for delivery in October was trading at 23.30 dollars up 1.05 dollars from Friday. It had risen as much as 2 dollars barrel earlier in the day.

Market observers described trading as hectic and volatile and predicted it would remain that way through most of the

"It's going to be a very interesting week," said Peter Beutel, president and oil analyst for Cameron Hanover Inc. in Bronxville, New York.

Refined petroleum products also shot up. Heating oil for next month delivery was trading at 65 cents a gallon, up 1.88 cents. October unleaded gasoline traded at 63.15 cents a gallon, up 1.54 cents.

Prices continued to rise overseas, adding to gains posted Monday when US. markets were closed for the Labour Day

Japan's economy slightly damaged from confrontation

TOKYO, Sept 4: Japan's giant economy is seen facing marginal damage from the latest US-Iraq confrontation, which has pushed up global oil prices, economists in Tokyo said on Wednesday, reports Reuter.

Any rapid surge in oil prices in theory should worsen Japan's inflationary picture by boosting imported prices, but many doubt if the current oil price surge would last for long. "In theory, a 10-per cent rise

in oil prices could push up wholesale prices here by 0.2 point a year, and the impact would become larger if that combined with another rapid yen plunge," said Soichi Okuda, a senior economist at NCB Research Institute.

"But the surge in oil prices has not been that drastic, so its impact on the economy at the moment is limited to being a psychological one," NCB's

Japan is the world's biggest

On Tuesday, oil prices in New York rallied as high as 24.25 US dollars a barrel after the US missile strike against Iraq in response to Baghdad's incursion into Kurdish areas in the north of Iraq. The prices later retreated to close at 23.40 US dollar a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange (NYMEX).

importer of Middle East Oil.

On Wednesday, the NYMEX crude futures contract, trading in Asia on the after-hours system, rose briefly to 23.65 US dollar after a CNN report said the United States had launched a second missile attack against

"If you ask if this is a plus or minus factor (for the economy), it should be minus," said Hiroshi Suzuki, a economist at Norinchukin Research Institute. The US Iraq tension could cut into profits of Japanese oil companies because they may not be able to boost prices of their products fast enough to offset the increased cost of importing oil, he said.

"But I don't think (the Iraq events) alone will spread inflationary concerns here," said

Japan's inflation has been

well under control, with consumer prices growing less than 0.5 per cent year-on-year and wholesale prices falling from

their year-ago levels. Filipino economy strong'

AFP report from Manila says: Philippines economic officials said Wednesday the economy was strong enough to withstand shocks from a possible increase in oil prices following the bombing of Iraqi targets by the United States.

"Our economy has become resilient enough to weather such problems coming from the outside," Cielito Habito, the Economic Planning Secretary

told reporters. "An increase in the world crude prices, will translate into our own domestic prices," he said, adding however, that "the rest of the economy need not suffer heavily from that kind of

bullish on our projection for the rest of the year." The Philippines has forecast 6.5 to 7.5 per cent growth in its gross national product for this

situation so we continue to be

UN delays decision on Turkey's request for trade ban relief

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 4: A UN committee decided to delay consideration of Turkey's request for exemptions from the trade embargo against Iraq until after the UN oil-for -food deal goes into effect, reports AP.

German Ambassador Antonius Eitel, chairman of the UN Sanctions Committee on Iraq told reporters there was considerable sympathy within his group for Turkey's economic hardship as a result of the 1990 sanctions on trade with Iraq.

But he said the oil-for-food sales plan requires that most of the oil sold by Iraq under the plan be sent through a Turkish pipeline, providing Turkey with substantial income from transit fees.

minister, said the freeze was

aimed at nudging private sector

business to resist demands for

double-digit wage increases.

Laying out the package, the gov-

ernment for the second time in

as many months readjusted

upward its forecast for the 1996

current account deficit and

downgraded its forecast of gross

domestic product (GDP) growth.

which has consistently out-

stripped government expecta-

tions, is now expected to surpass

15 billion dollars by the end of

this year, up from an earlier

to fall to seven per cent, down

from somewhere between seven

and 7.5 per cent predicted ear-

curbed at 4.5 per cent for the

whole year, it said although the

inflation rate for the first eight

months through August was al-

navigational safety and called

for improved training of crew-

men to reduce the chance of ac-

showed that nearly 60 per cent

of claims involving close to

1,000 shipping losses in the

straits were traced to human er-

sources, not ships, were largely

responsible for straits pollu-

tion and stressed the impor-

He also said land-based

ror, Jayakumar said.

A study by British insurers

lier, the government said.

The GDP growth is forecast

The inflation rate will be

forecast of 12 billion dollars.

The current account deficit,

gearing up to boost production still further as the 1995

stitute (UI), reports PTI.

news agency. UI said Australia. Canada and the US, were planning to increase their uranium production in the coming years for different reasons. UI reported that after nine

consecutive years of declining figures, world uranium production rose 4.4 per cent last year to reach 33.274 tonne. The institute, however, pointed out that this still represented little more than 50 per cent of the annual reactor requirements. The rest is covered by existing stocks which are declining, it said.

had risen to stimulate and supplement positive developments in the uranium mining industry. Australia, Canada, Niger and the US led the world in uranium production last year.

Corp posts \$3b in profits

owned Kuwait Petroleum Corp posted a record net profit of 869 million dinars (2.9 billions dollars) in the fiscal year that ended June 30, the official Kuwait News Agency reported Tuesday, according to AP.

cent in comparison with the previous fiscal year's 811 million dinars (2.7 billion dollars). the agency quoted Oil Minister Abdel Mohsen al-Medel as say-

higher profit to an improvement in operating revenues, plus some cuts in the year's overall expenses, He did not elaborate. The minister said among the

strategic options the KPC was working on was increasing Kuwait's crude output capacity to three million barrels a day by the year 2000. KPC oversees the oil indus-

try in the oil-rich emirate. Kuwait currently produces

two million barrels per day of crude oil, in line with a quota assigned by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries.

in Germany

compromise in Bavaria's retail sector will serve as a pilot contract for the whole country and end six months of tough negotiations and intermittent strikes, union and employer officials said Tuesday, reports

1.85 per cent annual pay raise retroactive to May 1. It also solves the tricky issue of employee compensation for working during expanded store opening hours beginning in November, when a new German law allowing longer shopping hours takes effect.

The agreement reached late Monday gives retail workers in longer store hours.

on weekdays and 2 pm on Saturday. The new law lets them stay open until 8 pm on week-

The overtime pay will be turned into compensation time. rather than cash.

Iraqi money changers handle US dollars and Iraqi dinars in Baghdad on Tuesday after US missile attack on southern Iraq. The attack came in retaliation for Saddam Hussein's

UN 'oil-for-food' plan with Iraq US grounds facing uncertainty

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 4: With Iraqi troops in Kurdish areas in the north, the United States said on Tuesday it could take "months and months" before the oil-for-food plan for Iraq could go into effect, reports Reuter.

drive in the northern Kurdish safe haven.

At the same time, Britain offered a draft Security Council resolution that would condemn Iraq's weekend attack on the Kurds and call for a return to the status quo. But envoys do not expect quick action and the draft may have to be revised.

It would recall council Resolution 688 of 1991, which condemned the repression of Iraqi civilians including Kurds after Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein's defeat in the Gulf War, and would condemn the recent attacks on Kurds as a new element of instability in the region.

It would also express concern that lrag's action threatened efforts to provide humanitarian aid for its civilian population under the oil-for-food plan.

BAGHDAD Sept 4 Food

prices in Baghdad jumped by

eight per cent Monday after the

United Nations announced its

decision to delay an oil-for

food deal because of frag's mili-

tary offensive in Iraqi Kurdis-

The US dollar, meanwhile,

rose form 1,200 Iraqi dinars on

Sunday to 1,270 dinars early

Monday on Iraqi exchange

markets before falling away to

Sugar rose from 600 to 650

A spokeswoman for UN Sec-

retary General Boutros Boutros-

Ghall said Sunday he had de-

cided to postpone implementa-

tion of the oil-for-food deal

signed in May, the first partial

lifting of the six-year-old oil

said the delay was not for "puni-

official Daily Al-Jumhuriya

Salah Al-Mokhtar, said Mon-

day: "people here think that the

UN has suspended implementa-

tive" but for security reasons.

Spokeswoman Sylvana Foa

But the Chief Editor of the

1,240 by the end of the day.

dinars per kilogramme.

embargo against Iraq.

tan, savs AFP.

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, who has already postponed implementation of the limited oil sale plan, said the new events would hamper humanitarian assistance ef-

He said in a statement that he was "concerned over the impact of the latest events which clearly will adversely affect the implementation of our programmes for humanitarian assistance.

The United Nations has several relief programmes in Iraq especially in the northern Kurdish-dominated provinces that President Saddam Hussein's troops entered late last week to oppose a Kurdish faction backed by Iran.

Both the British draft and UN statements steered away from mentioning the US cruise missile attack against Iraqi target early on Tuesday. Since the Gulf War, approved by the Untied Nations, US military ac-

Food prices in Baghdad

jump by 8 pc

(PUK)

tion in Iraq has been kept out of council discussions, giving cre-dence to those who question the validity of military strikes under UN resolutions. Resolution 688 on Iraq's op-

- AFP/UNB photo

pression of minorities deliberately excluded the use of force. Edward Gnehm, the Deputy US Representative, told Reuters the May 20 oil-for-food deal accord would have to be looked at again in light of the latest situa-

France calls for negotiations

AFP from Paris says: France called today for new negotiations to ensure that a UN. resolution allowing Iraq to use the proceeds of oil sales for food and medical supplies comes into force as soon as possible

"Our aims are first to ensure

peace in the region and to ensure that the Iraqi leaders are no longer in a position to harm their neighbours or their own people," government spokes man Alain Lamassoure told Europe-1 radio after Baghdad rebel faction.

we call for dialogue to ensure that the accord is brought into force as fast as possible. Lamassoure said

The US State Department said on Tuesday that the UN plant to let Iraq sell some oil to raise hard currency for food and medical supplies was off "for some time." The United Nations postponed the plan after Baghdad's attacks on Iraqi

Asked whether Paris condemned the Iraqi offensive, Lamassoure said: "France's reaction has been similar to that of the greater part of the international community. After a period of tension we should go back to peace and dialogue."

France, one of the 1991 Gulf War allies, withheld support for a first US missile attack on Iraq on Tuesday, saying Baghdad had not breached UN resolutions by sending its troops into Kurdish areas of Northern

rum, which follows a March

ministers, was a starting point.

meeting of ASEAN information

charter airline

WASHINGTON. Sept 4: The government grounded rich International Airways, saying the charter airline did not meet federal standards for training and maintenance of equipment, reports AP Records indicated that the

crew of the Miami-based company did not have proper training, the Federal Aviation Administration said. The grounding came after an

inspection last week, which was prompted by allegations of problems with flight crew training and maintenance. FAA inspectors found that some records were incomplete.

and other records showed that

required training had not been

There were also questions about the airline's ability to technically monitor day-to-day operations, the FAA said; some of the gauges used on equipment to install engines were out of calibration

Rich Airways did not immediately respond to a request for comment

The suspension of the carrier's certificate took effect Monday. Planes in the air were allowed to land but no others could take off. White said he did not know

airline to come into compliance and get its certificate back The carrier operates many of its flights out of the West Coast. from Los Angeles and other

how long it would take for the

cities, to Hawaii. It primarily carries passengers, though it was certified for cargo as well. The carrier has 16 L-1011 and five DC-8 planes. This is FAA's second action against the airline this sum-

In June, the FAA proposed dlrs 2.6 million in civil penal ties against Rich for maintenance violations.

The airline responded that the action was "unwarranted and unfounded," and no decision had been reached.

FAA was seeking the fines in two cases. It wanted dirs 95,000 because it believed Rich failed to remove an engine part that had passed its recommended use limits, and dlrs 2.55 million for removing parts from one L-1011 and using them on six others — a practice called parting out - without following procedures.

S Korea announces economic policy

SEOUL, Sept 4: South Korea's top economic planner Han Seun-Soo yesterday announced a long-awaited stimulus package, which critics here described as pro-business, stopgap measures falling far short of fixing structural problems, reports AFP. "The economic policy, will

focus on achieving prices stability and helping business firms recover vitality," Han said, adding that the package was aimed at improving efficiency and fighting inflation.

Price stability and new business vitality are two major goals which must be achieved to enhance South Korea's international competitive edge and boost exports, he said.

He announced a freeze on next year's wage hikes for officials of director-level rank or up, saying: "In order to help curb wage hikes, the government has decided to set an example.

Han, economy and finance

ready 4.4 per cent. S'pore warns of growing environmental dangers have serious implications for SINGAPORE, Sept 4: Singa-

cidents.

pore warned Monday of growing congestion and environmental dangers in the Straits of Malacca and Singapore and called for an international effort to keep the waterways open to global commerce, reports "Preserving the straits of

Malacca and Singapore is an international responsibility and cannot be just that of the littoral states alone," Foreign Minister Shanmugam Jayakumar told an international conference on the straits. "The two straits are not mere

geographic points. They are also geo-political and geo-economic checkpoints which allow a great flow of trade between different regions and oceans." he added

Jayakumar said the straits - the shortest Maritime link between East and West and the main oil-supply route from the Middle East to Japan - had assumed greater importance with growing global economic interdependence. He said there was rising con-

cern that the increase in shipping traffic in the straits may

cerned over the Internet being

used as a promotional platform

for child prostitution, a concern

tance of improved sewage and solid-waste disposal Malaysia, Indonesia and Sin-William O'Neill, Secretary-General of the International

Maritime Organization, told

the conference that users of the

straits should share the cost of

equipment, systems and installations needed to keep them "O'Neill also highlighted the increased environmental risks posed by larger tankers and cargo vessels in such a confined area and urged the three littoral states and ship operators to

work closely to achieve practi-

state on the back of cheaper

communications and the

ASEAN officials seek strategies to police Internet

cal solutions.

spread of computer use. which also figured at the recent However, any regional coop-Stockholm World Congress eration in regulating the Internet is still distant, with the search for common ground only just beginning, officials said.

Mohamad Maidin Packer Mohamad, Parliamentary Secretary to Singapore's Ministry of Information, stressed the need for ASEAN to harness the Internet's commercial potential and problems, such as lack of security in transactions.

fered a medium for ASEAN to fill "big gaps" in Western media coverage of ASEAN and counter "biased and negative" reports.

fold in Egyptian stock market

Trading rises 5

CAIRO, Sept 4: The volume of trading on the Eyptian stock market reached a record high of 5.1 billion pounds (1.5 billion dollars) from January until the end of August, the government daily Al-Ahram newspaper reported yesterday.

Financial sources told AFP this was almost five times as high as the total transactions for the January-August 1995 period, which stood at 1.2 billion pounds. The chairman of the Egyp-

tian capital market authority Abdel Hamid Ibrahim, quoted by Al-Ahram, attributed the increase mainly to three foreignbased investment funds which began trading on the market Ibrahim said these funds

which he did not identify, had a

combined capital of 136 million dollars. Meanwhile, business sector Minister Atef Ebeid said demand for shares of companies recently privatised by the government had increased considerably showing investors con-

fidence in the future of these

companies. He said privatisation plans for September included putting up for sale on the stock market the shares of eight new companies worth a total of 758 million pounds (around 222 million dollars).

Out of 314 firm singled out for privatisation, 32 have been already privatised, including 17 at more than 51 per cent, financial sources told AFP.

In another development, an official at Egypt's central bank said total bank deposits at the end of June 1996 stood at 174.8 billion pounds (around 51.4) billion dollars), Al-Ahram reported.

The amount indicates an increase of 18.3 billion pounds (or 11.7 per cent) since June 1995.

Uranium producers gearing up to boost production MUMBAI, Sept 4: World's key producers of uranium were

turnaround in the world uranium market was continuing. according to a special survey by the London-based uranium In-Stating this in the latest release of the world's nuclear

The institute said spot prices

Kuwait Petroleum

MANAMA, Sept 4: The state-The profit went up seven per

Al-Medej attributed the

Wage compromise

FRANKFURT, Sept 4: A wage

The compromise allows for a

the southern state 20-per cent overtime pay for those working Currently, most German stores stay open until 6:30 pm

days and 4 pm on Saturday.

SINGAPORE, Sept 4: South East Asian officials launched a difficult search Monday for joint strategies to police the internet amid growing concern over hard-core sexual content. child pornography and other excesses in cyberspace, reports

AFP.

tion of the accord.

The first ASEAN forum on the Internet will try to identify possibilities for regional cooperation on the issue and ways to tackle the challenge posed by the internet's explosive growth, officials said. It is the first joint effort by

members of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to find ways to harness the information highway to their benefit while fighting

its adverse influences and protecting local values.

From tiny Brunei, with a population of less than 300,000. to regional giant Indonesia. which counts 190 million people, ASEAN members see the Internet as both a boon and a threat "Like all technology, Inter-

net is a two-edged sword," Goh Liang Kwang, chief executive officer of the Singapore Broadcasting Authority (SBA), said at the opening of the three-day fo-"While Internet is a powerful medium for communication.

commerce and research, its potential for abuse cannot be overlooked There is useful information

sent troops to fight a Kurdish After long negotiations Iraqi leaders and the international community had agreed paper tomorrow that the UN on the oil-for-food resolution has simply decided to delay

Under the accord, Iraq will be allowed to sell two billion dollars of oil every six months under strick international supervision to raise money for food and medicine. The UN said that following lrag's military offensive in the Kurdish-controlled north it

We will clarify in our news

sending its observers, but the

accord will eventually go

ahead," Mokhtar told AFP.

and imports under the deal. Iraqi government forces and their allies from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) on Saturday seized Arbil, the main city in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, from the rival Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

will delay sending monitors

who are to supervise exports

The United States has threatened to respond to the intervention. Baghdad's first in Iraqi Kurdistan since allied powers set up a safe haven for the Kurds there after the 1991

content.

as well as garbage," he added. citing the presence of "racist, Singapore's typically tough approach, including a recently discriminatory, even obscene" ASEAN, which groups

Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines. Singapore. Thailand and Vietnam, faces its more liberal stance. hardest task" in maintaining "our social and cultural values in the face of this dynamic and telling reporters strategies boundless medium," he said. would depend on the legal framework and cultural her-Goh said the Singapore foitage of individual countries.

But ASEAN members are divided on how far governments should go in regulating the Internet on moral and political grounds, making the search for

announced regulatory bulwark to censor smut and regulate political and religious debate. contrasts with the Philippines' "Each country will have its own approach," Goh admitted,

Filipino delegate Glensipin told reporters Manila preferred 'self-policing" by Internet access providers, adding that regulating political discussion "would not be on our agenda." Sipin said the Philippines was, however, extremely con-

against sexual exploitation of children. The Internet provides users with anonymity and enables them to make contact with child molesters and exchange information. They also have

worldwide "surf" the Internet. and Asia accounts for about 1.5 millions users, growing at a rate of 10 per cent per month. officials say. The internet is becoming in-

creasingly popular in ASEAN

the ability to broadly distribute pornographic material. Some 50 million people

He said the Internet also of-