

## International

## 21 selected for Sahitya Akademi Awards '96

NEW DELHI, Feb 16: Noted a economist Ashok Mitra, Indo-Anglian novelist Sunetra Gupta and Nepali poet Mohan Thakuri are among the 21 creative writers selected for the Sahitya Akademi Awards 1996, reports PTI.

"Except in Kashmiri, for which we did not find any suitable work, awards have been given in all other languages," Sahitya Akademi secretary Prof K Satchidanandan, told reporters here yesterday.

The other winners of the prestigious award includes Nirupama Bargohain (Assamese), Ghaneshwar (Dogri), Himanshi Shelat (Gujarati), Surendra Verma (Hindi), GS Amur (Kannada), Shankar Ramani (Konkani), Raj Mohan Jha (Marathi), T Padmanabhan (Malayalam), R K Madhubin (Manipuri), Gangadhar Gadgil (Marathi), Satyanarayana Rajguru (Oriya), Santokh Singh Dhir (Punjabi), Nem Narayan Joshi (Rajasthani), Keshab Chandra Das (Sanskrit), Lakshmi Khilani (Sindhi), Ashokamitra (Tamil), Kethu Vishwanatha Reddy (Telugu) and Ilyas Ahmad Gaddi (Urdu).

Besides, translation prizes have been awarded to authors

in 19 languages. Prof Satchidanandan said.

The awards would be presented to the winners at a function here on February 18, which would be attended among others by the Akademi president, Prof U R Ananthamurthy and vice-president Ramakanta Rath, besides leading Assamese litterateur, Brendra Kumar Bhat-tacharya and Uzeek scholar, Azad N Shamatov.

The ceremony would coincide with the week long Festival of Letters beginning here on Monday he said.

## Lankan spy plane crashes during test flight

COLOMBO, Feb 16: A remote control Sri Lankan Air Force spy plane crashed during a test flight at a north-central air base, raising the losses of similar planes to three, defence sources here said, reports AFP.

The Israeli-made Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) crashed at Anuradhapura five days ago during testing, the sources said, adding that the second UAV crashed a month ago.

## Bid to protect capital from rebels' advances

# Zairean govt bans protests, cracks down on news media

KINSHASA, Zaire, Feb 16: With rebels pushing in from eastern Zaire, President Mobutu Sese Seko began preparing for a fight for the capital, banning protests and cracking down on news media, reports AP.

The government, complaining of 'enemy propaganda' and claiming the Zairean army is making great progress in a month-old counteroffensive, issued decrees Friday night banning protests and cracking down on the news media.

Presidential elections promised for May appear increasingly unlikely, with the government saying voting can't occur while part of the country is occupied by Laurent Kabila's rebels.

In the eastern war zone, Kabila is claiming new progress in his march westward toward the presidential compound at Gbadolite, where Mobutu has been holed up. On Saturday, he threatened to attack the largest

refugee camp in the area unless

refugees he said were being

armed by Zaire cleared out. And in a sign of the public bitterness toward Mobutu, whose neglect of the army is blamed for the rebels' advances, opposition newspapers are openly poking fun at his protest campaign.

One cartoon Friday in L'Observateur showed the gravely ill president, dressed in striped pajamas and a leopard-skin hat, speeding away from Kabila's forces in a hospital bed on wheels, a look of panic on his face. In a corner, with a smug smile, stood Etienne Tshisekedi, the militant opposition leader who has called for talks with Kabila.

Tshisekedi is the only politician to openly support negotiations, but diplomats and politicians say that privately, many within Mobutu's circle also are urging him to talk rather than continue a war his ill-equipped, untrained army

has little chance of winning.

Many Zairians agree.

"As far as I'm concerned, the only way to get a solution to this problem is through negotiations. We don't need war. We don't want war. We just want a change in this life," said businessman Luke Mkaal, chatting on a crowded Kinshasa street corner as dozens of others nodded in agreement.

"People in this country are tired. They support Kabila, even though they don't know what he will give them."

The feeling is that anyone would be better than Mobutu, whose 31 years in power have left mineral-rich Zaire among the world's poorest countries.

The personal pillaging and inefficiency for which Mobutu and his cronies are famous is evident throughout the once-gracious city of crumbling colonial buildings and slums. Government ministries, even the all-important defense ministry, are housed in shells of

buildings with broken stairways, cockroaches skittering on moldy carpets and bare bulbs dangling over rusted typewriters with torn ribbons.

About the only thing maintained here is the hilltop palace that Mobutu uses on his rare visits to Kinshasa. Its vast lawns are groomed like golf courses and trod upon only by dozens of presidential peacocks.

A one-day strike called by Tshisekedi supporters on Monday shut down the city of more than 6 million, prompting the Cabinet to announce draconian measures Friday night outlawing public protests and anti-government strikes until the war is over. Violators, the law warned, would be treated as enemy collaborators.

About 100 people demonstrated Saturday outside Tshisekedi's home in defiance of the ban, chanting "Kabila! Kabila!" There was no sign of soldiers or police.

## Karen villagers fleeing to Thai border camps

UMPHANG, Thailand, Feb 16: Fleeing a homeland turned into a war zone by a massive Myanmar government forces' offensive, thousands of Karen villagers are trekking through the jungle to camps across the border in Thailand, reports AFP.

Carrying a few belongings on pushcarts and in rice sacks, convoys of families are moving through the forests led by their village headman towards emergency camps over the frontier.

Reports said that virtually all the Karen National Union's (KNU) bases in the area have been abandoned amid a three-pronged offensive by the ruling junta, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC).

Between 10,000 and 15,000 people were on the move, join-

ing 80,000 others who have fled Myanmar military rule in recent years and are already sheltering in camps across the Thai border, according to Maha Sha, joint general secretary one of the KNU.

Doctor Em Marta, KNU head of health and welfare said government military divisions numbering as many as 10,000 men were moving faster than expected through the KNU's enclave in eastern Myanmar.

Military sources said seven government divisions had been deployed.

Villagers were ditching their possessions and scattering into the jungle, before finding their way along dirt roads and pathways towards Thailand, he said.

## Police lifts curfew in Lankan town

COLOMBO, Feb 16: Police lifted an overnight curfew in a southern Sri Lankan town Sunday, where riots during the cremation of a slain politician left at least one dead and 30 injured, police said, reports AP.

Soldiers and policemen, however, patrolled the Ratnapura town and adjoining villages, but there were no incidents of fresh violence, a policeman in the region said.

Police on Saturday fired on mobs that began rioting after attempts to disperse the crowds with tear gas failed.

Police Sunday corrected earlier reports of three deaths and said, two people were killed in the incidents. One died in police firing and another when mobs threw firebombs into a shop.

The crowd of the governing party supporters say police were slow to react to the assassina-

tion of a ruling party lawmaker. To vent their anger, they hurled rocks and bottles at a police station on Saturday.

Mobs also attacked a second police station in the nearby town of Kuruwita, a few hours after the cremation, setting fire to cars, throwing stones and empty bottles.

The curfew was clamped down shortly after the funeral in Ratnapura town, 70 kilometres (43 miles) southeast of the capital Colombo.

Nalanda Ellawala, 29, Sri Lanka's youngest lawmaker, was gunned down with a bodyguard during a local election campaign Tuesday. Supporters of Ellawala, who comes from an influential political family in Ratnapura, began attacking the homes and shops of the opposition United National Party supporters, whom they accuse

of being behind the killing.

On Friday, police arrested seven opposition party supporters in Ratnapura in connection with the slaying. The UNP denied allegations that its supporters were to blame for the killing.

The local elections are being held for the first time since the People's Alliance came to power in 1994. The elections to 3,500 seats are seen as a test of the popularity of President Chandrika Kumaratunga's government.

No polls were planned in the war-torn north and the east, where Tamil militants have been fighting for a separate homeland. The rebels allege Tamils are discriminated against by the Sinhalese majority, who control the government and the military.

## Sharif's younger brother to rule Punjab province

ISLAMABAD, Feb 15: The Pakistan Muslim League (PML) Party, which won a landslide victory in general elections this month and has named its leader Nawaz Sharif to be prime minister, chose his younger brother today to rule the country's most populous Punjab province, reports Reuters.

The unusual decision followed widespread speculation about the role Sharif's younger brother Shahbaz Sharif could play in the next government after the February 3 election.

Punjab PML president Chaudhury Shujaat Hussain, who himself was candidate for the same office, announced the choice of Shahbaz to be Punjab Chief Minister at a news conference.

Both Nawaz and Shahbaz are certain to be elected to the two offices because of big PML majorities in the 217-seat National Assembly and the 248-seat Punjab Assembly.

It will be the first time in Pakistan that a brother of a prime minister in office will be chief executive in a province.

## PML candidate elected Speaker unanimously

ISLAMABAD, Feb 16: Veteran politician Elahi Bakhsh Soomro of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML) was unanimously elected Speaker of the new National Assembly after former premier Benazir Bhutto's party withdrew its candidate, reports AFP.

Soomro, a former minister for science and technology, was nominated by Prime Minister-in-waiting Nawaz Sharif whose PML together with allies commands a two-thirds majority in the 217-member House.

He was sworn-in by outgoing Speaker Yusuf Raza Gilani who had served for three years until Benazir and her administration were ousted by President Farooq Ahmed Leghari in November on charges of corruption and misrule.

## Clashes leave 17 dead in Colombia

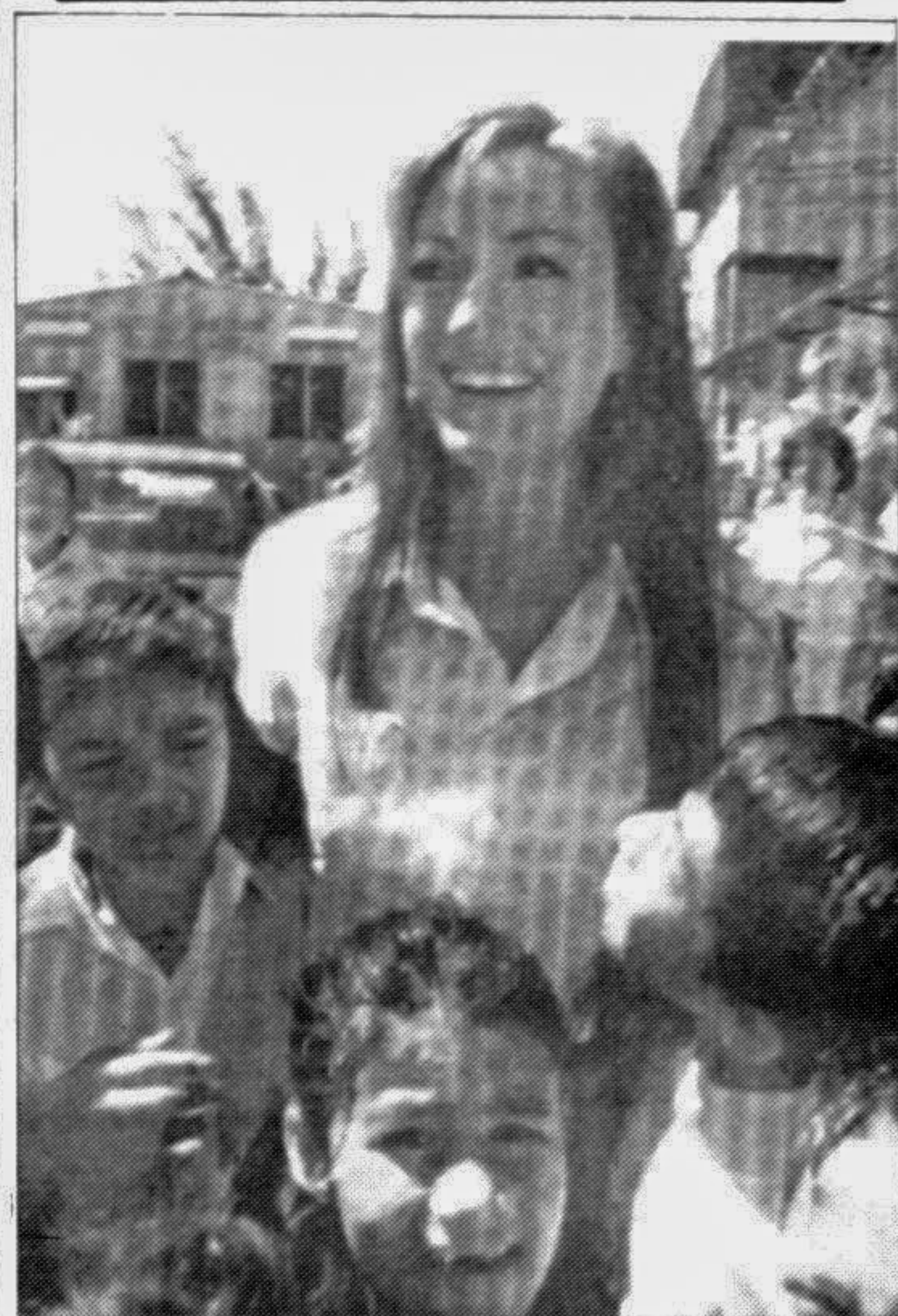
BOGOTA, Feb 16: Fourteen Colombian rebels and three police were killed in fighting around Colombia on Friday and Saturday, government sources said, reports AFP.

The fighting began Friday near the northern town of Tera, when rebels from the revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) ambushed a police patrol.

One police officer and three rebels were killed in the latest battles in four decades of political fighting here.

Two police and seven rebels were killed on the north coast in a FARC attack on the police post overnight.

## Off the Record



British actress Jane Seymour, special representative of UNICEF, spends time with Salvadoran children during her visit to a centre for poor children involved in gangs, on Saturday. UNICEF funds this kind of project, as well as others, in Central America. — Reuters/UNB photo

## Tale of teller twin

HUNTINGTON, West Virginia: Faye Hudson and Maye Smith are still hard at work, even though they've retired from the small town savings and loan business as millionaires, reports AP.

The 73-year-old twin sisters are on tour promoting their book about how they advanced from tellers to executives at the Point Pleasant Federal Savings Bank.

They sold the 102-year-old thrift in the Ohio River town in 1995 to Charleston's One Valley Bancorp. They won't say how big their share was, but shareholders received a total of about \$17.5 million in stock and cash.

The book was proposed by Harper Collins Publishers of New York.

A year of interviews with author Leslie Whitaker resulted in "Maye and Faye's Building and Loan: The Story of a Remarkable Sisterhood, How Twin Sisters Ran the Cleanest, Kindest Bank in America and Did Right by a Whole Town."

Their rise in banking began in 1952 when Smith took a job as a teller after her husband died and left her with an infant son. Her sister started as a teller about 10 years later.

## Gooding in show-me hell of entertainment

NEW YORK: Everywhere he goes, Cuba Gooding Jr hears people say the same thing: "Show me the money!"

As a self-centered football star in "Jerry Maguire," Gooding utters the catch phrase that helped him win a best supporting actor Oscar nomination, reports AP.

"And suddenly," Gooding says in the latest Entertainment Weekly, "I'm in the show-me hell of entertainment."

Taking the public outbursts in stride, Gooding is often asked to autograph 100 dollar bills, endorsing them with the catch phrase too, of course.

In the movie, Gooding is the demanding client of a sports agent played by Tom Cruise. In real life, he had similar stormy relations with agents, switching representation six times in the last decade.

The actor who got his start in "Boyz n the Hood" defends the cavalcade of agents.

## ROK army troops, police put on alert around Seoul

SEOUL, Feb 16: South Korean army troops and police were put on alert today in and around Seoul after a top-level defector was shot and critically wounded by suspected North Korean agents, officials said, reports AFP.

Army units in Seoul areas were put on alert against terrorism by North Korean agents or guerrillas, a defence ministry spokesman told.

Police also tightened security around key government facilities nationwide, saying "this is a sensitive security situation".

In the South Korean capital and surrounding areas police and army troops armed with sub-machine-guns and accompanied by sniffer dogs were checking cars at roadblocks.

The government called an urgent meeting of top security officials to discuss the shooting of Lee Han-Young, a 37-year-old nephew of North Korean leader Kim Jong Il's estranged live-in

girlfriend, Sung Jye Rim. He defected to the South in 1982.

Lee was in critical condition in a Seoul hospital with bullets lodged in his brain and chest after two gunmen shot him Sunday night at an apartment building in a suburb, south of Seoul.

Indian customs seize container of fish

NEW DELHI, Feb 16: Indian customs officers today seized a batch of fish which had been stuffed with foreign currency worth some 570,000 dollars and was being exported to Singapore, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, says AFP.

Suspicious officials took the container of fish from a Singapore airlines flight which was preparing to take off from the Southern Indian City of Madras, the news agency said.

## Tajik govt issues ultimatum to rebels

DUSHANBE, Feb 16: The government of Tajikistan issued an ultimatum today to rebels holding 11 hostages, warning that unless the captives were freed by 0530 GMT, troops would storm the rebel base, government spokesman Zafar Saidov said, reports AFP.

The information was only given to journalists a few minutes before the ultimatum expired.

According to Saidov, radio contact with the rebels, which had been broken off at 1130 GMT Saturday had been restored at 0315 GMT Sunday.

Eleven hostages, including eight UN personnel, have been held by the rebels for more than a week.

## 'Netanyahu mounting intl opinion against Syria'

CAIRO, Feb 16: Syrian Foreign Minister Faruq el-Shara on Saturday accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of seeking to mount international opinion against Damascus by claiming it has a massive arms programme, reports AFP.

"Syria does not adopt intransigent positions, does not distance itself from the peace process and there is no massive Syrian armament plan as Netanyahu claimed in the United States to mount international public opinion against Syria," Shara said during a visit to Cairo.

During his visit to Washington this week, Netanyahu accused Syria, as well as Iran and Iraq, of arming themselves and

urged the United States to prevent them from acquiring long-range missiles.

"Dominant countries like Iraq and Iran and for that matter Syria, are arming themselves feverishly with ballistic missiles, chemical and biological weapons, and if Iraq and Iran had their way, nuclear warheads," he said on Friday.

Netanyahu held talks with US President Bill Clinton this week and said he was prepared to discuss peace with Syria but not from the position of the previous Israeli government.

Syria is demanding the return of the Golan Heights, captured by Israel in 1967, in exchange for a peace treaty, which Netanyahu has refused.



American actress Courtney Love (R), film director Milos Forman (C), and actor Edward Norton (L) pose for photographers prior to a press conference to present their film "The People vs Larry Flint" on Berlin's 47th International Film Festival on Saturday. — Reuters/UNB photo

# 44 paintings of Moghul India on display at UK nat'l museum

NEW DELHI, Feb 16: Drawn 350 years ago, the 44 paintings of Moghul India were locked away for the last two centuries in the royal library of Windsor Castle, reports AP.

Now, the illustrations from a historical tome from the court of Shah Jahan, who gave India its most recognisable monuments, are all on public display for the first time since they left India.

They are being called the artistic equivalent of the Taj Mahal, the marble tomb built by the same emperor for the most beloved of his wives.

The paintings from the Padshahnama, or King of the World chronicles, give views of court celebrations, regal lion hunts, royal weddings and epic battles.

The Moghuls were Muslim invaders from Central Asia and established their dynasty in India in 1526. They remained until the British formally declared India a colony in 1858.

Shah Jahan, the fifth Moghul ruler, was master of most of the Indian subcontinent for 30 years until 1658. It was a blood-filled reign of conquest and court intrigue.

But it also was the peak of exquisite miniature art and the soaring architecture of the Red Fort and the Friday Mosque in Delhi, and the Taj Mahal in Agra.

After a war among his four sons, Shah Jahan was deposed by Aurangzeb and imprisoned for the last eight years of his life in Agra's fort, from where he could see in the distance the shimmering Taj Mahal on the opposite river bank.

The illustrations, about 10 by 15 inches (25 by 40 centimetres), are painted in rich colors unfaded by the centuries, and with details so tiny they can barely be seen unaided.

A magnifying glass reveals the facets of a jewel the size of a pinhead, the texture of a Per-

sian carpet, the opulent embroidery of an aristocrat's cloak or the wrinkles in an elephant's trunk.

The Padshahnama panels tell the story of Shah Jahan's princely exploits, his ascension to the throne and the first 10 years of his rule. The original chronicles of his final 20 years have been lost.

"There is no way of ascribing value to them, because nothing belonging to this period of this quality has ever come up for public auction," said Sushma Bahl of the British Council, one of the sponsors.

The volume was a gift to Britain's King George III in 1997.

Today, Indian sentries in ceremonial turbans watch a stream of visitors file through a metal detector into a softly lit gallery of the National Museum. Inside the climate-controlled hall, a more businesslike soldier stands guard

with a submachine gun.

The exhibition is a rare glimpse of a treasure that will soon become inaccessible again.

The paintings had been bound in a single volume wrapped in silk until 1994 when the binding was removed for conservation treatment of the pages. An exhibition was assembled to mark India's 50th year of independence, but after a world tour the volume will be rebound and returned to limited view in the royal library.

The one-month exhibition closes in New Delhi February 28 and moves to Buckingham Palace in London until September. Then it begins a 13-month tour in the United States at the Sackler Museum of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, the Metropolitan Museum of New York, the Los Angeles County Museum, the Kimbell Art Museum of Fort Worth, and the Indianapolis Museum of Art.

## Albright confident of continued reforms in Russia

ROME, Feb 16: Launching an around-the-world tour, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright registered confidence that political and economic reform will survive in Russia whatever President Boris Yeltsin's fate, reports AP.

She said the Clinton administration was working closely with other leaders in the Kremlin whose dedication to democracy and a market economy was growing.

Albright boarded her Air Force jet at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington Saturday and flew to Italy to begin a nine-country trek over 11 days — time enough, she insists, to roll up her sleeves and do real foreign policy business in Europe and Asia, not just shake hands and say hello.

"The Albright Express is launched," she declared.

In Europe, she intends to fine-tune with US allies a charter to be offered to Russia giving it "a voice not a veto" in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization as the alliance starts in July to push eastward to Russia's border.

And in Asia, she will visit South Korea, Japan and China "to make very clear we have vital strategic interests in the area."

In the planning stage is a visit to the demilitarized zone between North and South Korea to symbolize the US commitment to Seoul's defence.

Looming as the most important stop is Moscow, where Yeltsin's future is clouded by rising political opposition, economic hardship for all but an elite new capitalist class and his uncertain health after quintuple bypass surgery last year and pneumonia in January.

Talking to reporters crossing the Atlantic, Albright left no doubt the Clinton administration was looking beyond the Russian president even while wishing him well and planning a summit between Yeltsin and President Clinton in Helsinki, Finland, next month.

Paying tribute to the "important role" he has played in democratizing and reforming Russia, Albright said "there are other elements within the gov-

ernment — increasingly so — that are also dedicated to democracy and economic reform."

And so, she said, "We do not have concerns about the future direction of Russia and want to continue to work with other leaders and with President Yeltsin also because of the good relationship (Clinton has built up with him)."

Communists and ardent nationalists are tearing at the 66-year-old Yeltsin, blaming him for Russia's bumpy economy and for his ties to the West that failed to head off the prospective absorption of former Soviet allies by NATO.

Albright at her Senate confirmation hearing outlined plans to shuffle US assistance to Russia from humanitarian needs and joint projects to trade and creating jobs.

"Clearly, the Russians have had serious problems with their economy," Albright said en route to Rome. "But there are huge pockets of improvement" along with a necessity for reform.

The expansion of NATO to eastern and central Europe is rattling Russian nerves and drawing increased opposition from American analysts and former State Department officials. They view the expansion as unnecessarily provocative. Former Russian foreign minister Andrei V. Kozyrev, an ardent reformer, argues it will strengthen the hand of the militant nationalists and humiliate his country.

But Albright said new members will be invited to join in Madrid July 7-8 — the Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary are the odds-on favorites — despite Russia's objections.

She said Saturday she still hoped to assuage Russia's concerns, and would work on the charter during her talks in Rome on Sunday, in Germany and France on Monday and in Brussels on Tuesday with the NATO allies, and in Wednesday in Britain.

The aim is to put "meat" on the idea of a charter linking NATO to Russia without giving Russia membership, she said.