

## 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, reported PTI.

"Except in Kashmir, 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 Bargahain (Assamese), Ganeswaran (Dogri), Himanshi Shelat (Gujarati), Surendra Verma (Hindi), GS Amur (Kannada), Shankar Ramani (Konkani), Raj Mohan Jha (Maithili), T Padmanabhan (Malayalam), R K Madhubir (Manipuri), Gangadhar Gadgil (Marathi), Satyanarayana Rajguru (Oriya), Santosh Singh Dhir (Punjabi), Neer Narayan Joshi (Rajasthani), Keshav Chandra Das (Sanskrit), Lakhmi Khilani (Sindhi), Ashokamitran (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 Ananthamurti and vice-president Ramakanta Rath, besides leading Assamese litterateur, Birendra Kumar Bhattacharya and Uzeek scholar, Adad N Shammat.

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.

## 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, joining

8,000 others who have fled Myanmars military rule in recent years and are already sheltering in camps across the Thai border, according to Mahe 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.

## BRIEFLY

### Violence claims 10 in India:

At least ten persons were killed and several others injured in large-scale violence in two areas of curfew-bound Khowai subdivision of west Tripura district Saturday night, official sources said, PTI reports from Agartala.

The sources said that some armed tribals raided Ramchandraghat and Gangabari areas and fired indiscriminately killing ten and injuring many. The victims were all non-tribals. The raiders also torched a large number of houses. All the seriously injured were admitted to the GB hospital in Agartala.

### Gunmen kill 8 in Colombia:

Uniformed gunmen killed eight youths Saturday in the north-west city of Medellin in what police suspect was a revenge attack by one criminal gang on another, AP reports from Bogota.

The assailants forced their way into a house, made their victims lie down on the floor and shot them execution-style in the head with revolvers, said Gen. Alfredo Salgado, the city police commander. He said the gunmen were wearing uniforms of the government's security forces. Colombia's armed groups, including leftist guerrillas, often dress in stolen army and police uniforms.

### Arms worth \$1m found in Paraguay:

A one million dollar arms shipment discovered in the wreckage of a plane that crashed in Brazil's Matto Grosso state was purchased by drug dealers and destined for Colombian guerrillas authorities said Saturday. AFP reports from Asuncion.

The shipment which includes Paraguayan army rifles and machine guns of North American origin, was intended to be sold to the guerrillas for cocaine, sources in the National Congress said. The twin-engine plane registered in Brazil left a secret air strip in northern Paraguay for Colombia and crashed in Matto Grosso February 12.

### Bus-train crash kills 4 in S China:

In the second deadly accident in South China in two days, a bus and train crash killed four people Friday, Hong Kong's Wen Wei Po newspaper reported, AP reports from Hong Kong.

Ten people were also injured in the crash near Chaoan in Guangdong province, when a passenger bus tried to run a rail crossing and smashed into a train, the Beijing-funded newspaper reported. The impact threw the bus 30 metres (100 feet), it said. On Thursday, 40 died when an apparently badly-maintained long distance bus burst into flames in Guangdong, which borders the British colony of Hong Kong.

### 50 Zairean troops flee to Tanzania:

Fifty more Zairean soldiers arrived in Kigoma Town, western Tanzania, on Friday evening, totalling the number of Zairean government troops fleeing from the eastern Zaire to 211, Xinhua reports from Dar Es Salaam.

Acting Kigoma regional commissioner, Alhaji Lugusha told the official daily news in a telephone interview yesterday from the town of Kigoma that the 50 combatants were not heavily armed like the 161 soldiers who arrived on Thursday. The Zairean troops loyal to ailing President Mobutu Sese Seko are reportedly running away from heavy fighting against rebels in eastern Zaire.

## 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 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 paintings, 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-

## International

### 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 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.

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 dozed 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 piffling 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.

### Sharif's younger brother to rule Punjab province

ISLAMABAD, Feb 15: The Pakistani 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 Reuter.

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 Baksh 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 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

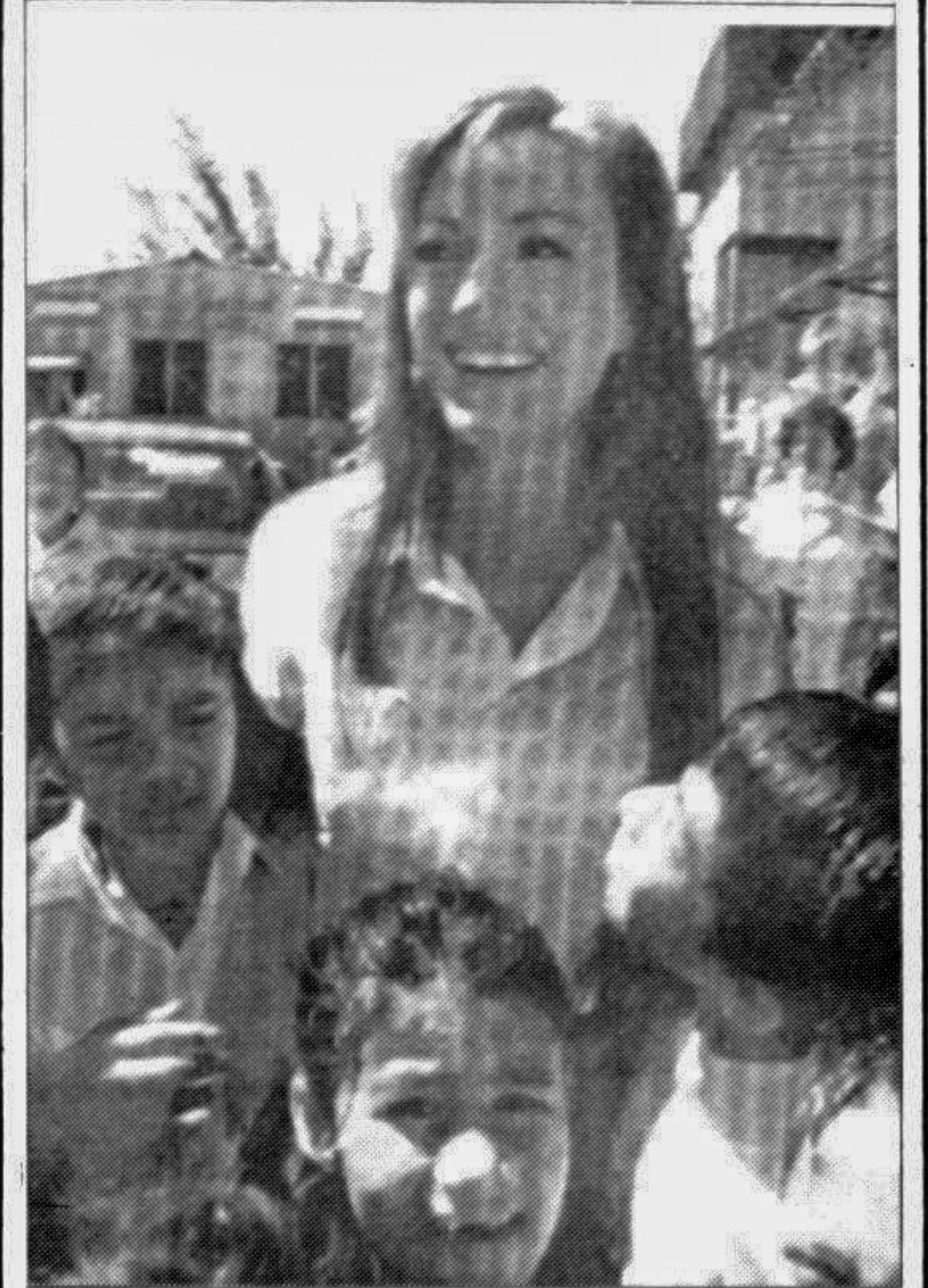
BOGOTA, Feb 16: Fourteen Colombian rebels and three police were killed in fighting around Colombia on Friday and Saturday, government sources said, reports AFP.

The fighting began Friday near the northern town of Tercerita, 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're 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 outburst in stride, Gooding is often asked to autograph 100 dollars 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 sniper 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.

## Albright confident of continued reforms in Russia

ROME, Feb 16: Launching an around-the-world tour, Secretary of State Madeline 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.

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.

"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.